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A

Complete Novel by
Robert Louis Stevenson

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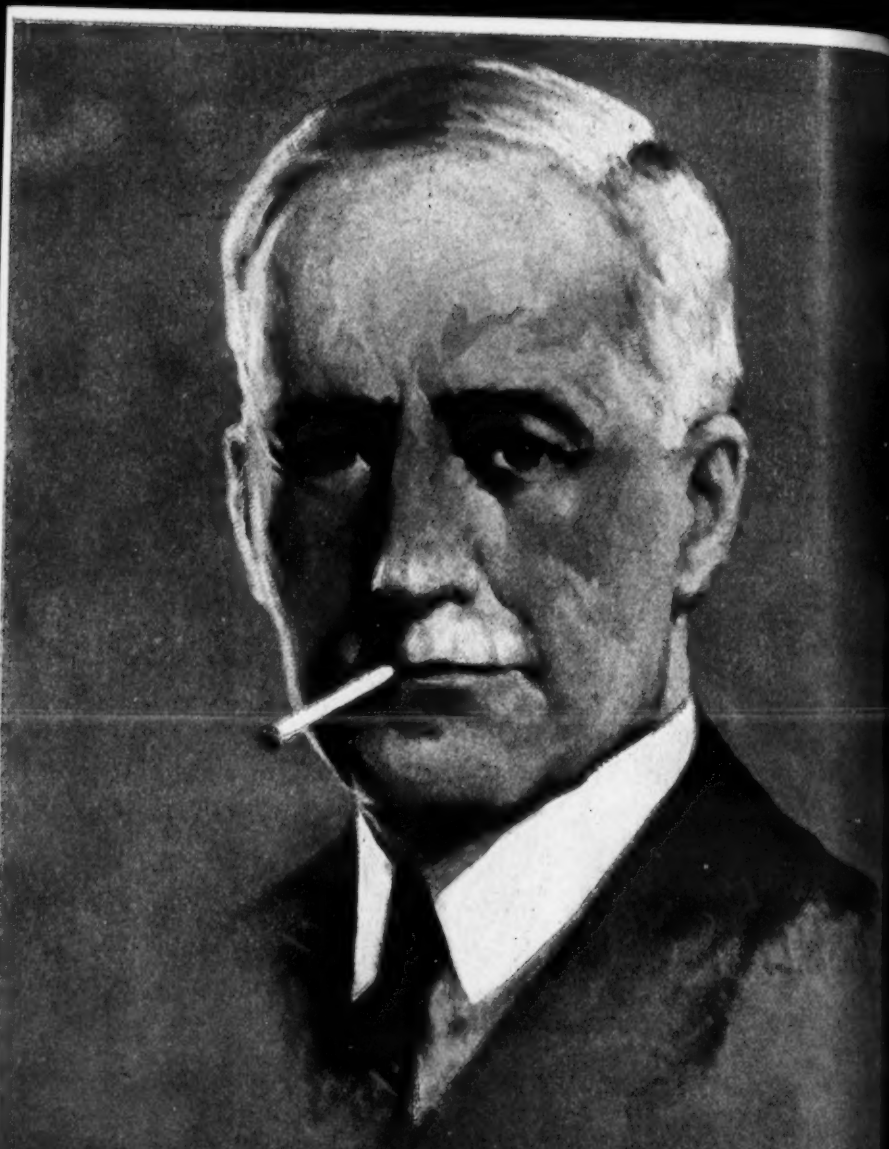
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January
1926

AINSLIE'S

STORIES THAT CHARM AND ALWAYS WILL

Vol. LVI
No. 5

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On the News Stands January 15th



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BY

CHARLES HOUSTON



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See the naked heart and spirit,

Know what spurs the action gives:

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Purer than we judge we should,

We should love each other better—

If we only understood."

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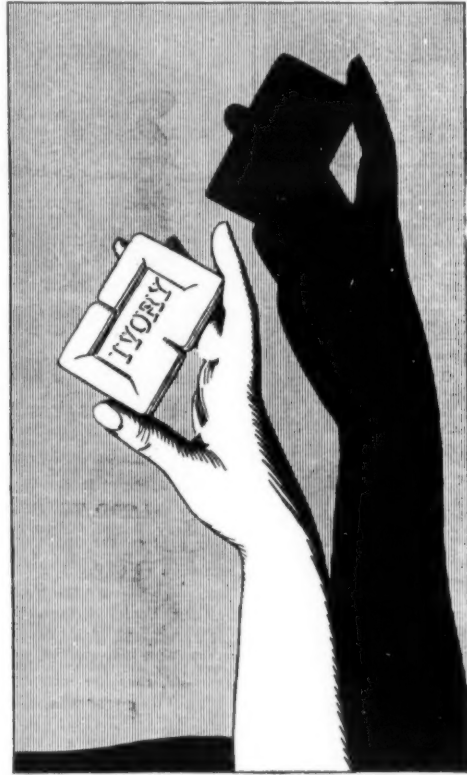
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Kindly send me entirely free of charge (1) a full description of the position checked below; (2) Specimen examination questions; (3) Free copy of illustrated book "How to Get a U. S. Government Job"; (4) A list of the U. S. Government Jobs now obtainable; (5) Tell me how I can get the position I have checked.

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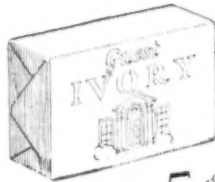
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AINSLEE'S

VOL. LVI.

JANUARY, 1926.

No. 5

A Complete Novel
by

Robert Louis Stevenson



The Treasure of Franchard

CHAPTER I.

BY THE DYING MOUNTEBANK.

THEY had sent for the doctor from Bourron before six. About eight some villagers came round for the performance, and were told how matters stood. It seemed a liberty for a mountebank to fall ill like real people, and they made off again in dudgeon. By ten Madame Tentaillon was gravely alarmed, and had sent down the street for Doctor Desprez.

The doctor was at work over his manuscripts in one corner of the little dining room, and his wife was asleep over the fire in another, when the messenger arrived.

"Sapristi!" said the doctor. "You

should have sent for me before. It was a case for hurry." And he followed the messenger as he was, in his slippers and skullcap.

The inn was not thirty yards away, but the messenger did not stop there; he went in at one door and out by another into the court, and then led the way by a flight of steps beside the stable to the loft where the mountebank lay sick. If Doctor Desprez were to live a thousand years, he would never forget his arrival in that room, for not only was the scene picturesque, but the moment made a date in his existence. We reckon our lives, I hardly know why, from the date of our first sorry appearance in society, as if from a first humiliation; for no actor can come upon

the stage with a worse grace. Not to go further back, which would be judged too curious, there are subsequently many moving and decisive accidents in the lives of all, which would make as logical a period as this of birth. And here, for instance, Doctor Desprez, a man past forty, who had made what is called a failure in life, and was, moreover, married, found himself at a new point of departure when he opened the door of the loft above Tentaillon's stable.

It was a large place, lighted only by a single candle set upon the floor. The mountebank lay on his back upon a pallet; a large man, with a Quixotic nose inflamed with drinking. Madame Tentaillon stooped over him, applying a hot-water-and-mustard embrocation to his feet, and on a chair close by sat a little fellow of eleven or twelve, with his feet dangling. These three were the only occupants, except the shadows. But the shadows were a company in themselves; the extent of the room exaggerated them to a gigantic size, and from the low position of the candle the light struck upward and produced deformed foreshortenings. The mountebank's profile was enlarged upon the wall in caricature, and it was strange to see his nose shorten and lengthen as the flame was blown about by drafts. As for Madame Tentaillon, her shadow was no more than a gross hump of shoulders, with now and again a hemisphere of head. The chair legs were spindled out as long as stilts, and the boy sat perched atop of them, like a cloud, in the corner of the roof.

It was the boy who took the doctor's fancy. He had a great arched skull, the forehead and the hands of a musician, and a pair of haunting eyes. It was not merely that these eyes were large, or steady, or the softest ruddy brown. There was a look in them, besides, which thrilled the doctor and made him half uneasy. He was sure he

had seen such a look before, and yet he could not remember how or where. It was as if this boy, who was quite a stranger to him, had the eyes of an old friend or an old enemy. And the boy would give him no peace; he seemed profoundly indifferent to what was going on, or rather abstracted from it in a superior contemplation, beating gently with his feet against the bars of the chair and holding his hands folded on his lap. But, for all that, his eyes kept following the doctor about the room with a thoughtful fixity of gaze. Desprez could not tell whether he was fascinating the boy, or the boy was fascinating him. He busied himself over the sick man; he put questions; he felt the pulse; he jested; he grew a little hot and swore; and still, whenever he looked round, there were the brown eyes waiting for his with the same inquiring, melancholy gaze.

At last the doctor hit on the solution at a leap. He remembered the look now. The little fellow, although he was as straight as a dart, had the eyes that go usually with a crooked back; he was not at all deformed, and yet a deformed person seemed to be looking at you from below his brow. The doctor drew a long breath, he was so much relieved to find a theory—for he loved theories—and to explain away his interest.

For all that, he dispatched the invalid with unusual haste, and, still kneeling with one knee on the floor, turned a little round and looked the boy over at his leisure. The boy was not in the least put out, but looked placidly back at the doctor.

"Is this your father?" asked Desprez. "Oh, no," returned the boy; "my master."

"Are you fond of him?" continued the doctor.

"No, sir," said the boy.

Madame Tentaillon and Desprez exchanged expressive glances.

"That is bad, my man," resumed the

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latter with a shade of sternness. "Every one should be fond of the dying, or conceal their sentiments, and your master here is dying. If I have watched a bird a little while stealing my cherries, I have a thought of disappointment when he flies away over my garden wall and I see him steer for the forest and vanish. How much more a creature such as this, so strong, so astute, so richly endowed with faculties! When I think that, in a few hours, the speech will be silenced, the breath extinct, and even the shadow vanished from the wall, I, who never saw him, this lady, who knew him only as a guest, are touched with some affection."

The boy was silent for a little, and appeared to be reflecting.

"You did not know him," he replied at last. "He was a bad man."

"He is a little pagan," said the landlady. "For that matter, they are all the same, these mountebanks, tumblers, artists, and what not. They have no interior."

But the doctor was still scrutinizing the little pagan, his eyebrows knotted and uplifted.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"Jean-Marie," said the lad.

Desprez leaped upon him with one of his sudden flashes of excitement, and felt his head all over from an ethnological point of view.

"Celtic, Celtic!" he said.

"Celtic!" cried Madame Tentaillon, who had perhaps confounded the word with hydrocephalous. "Poor lad! Is it dangerous?"

"That depends," returned the doctor grimly. And then once more addressing the boy: "And what do you do for your living, Jean-Marie?" he inquired.

"I tumble," was the answer.

"So! Tumble?" repeated Desprez. "Probably healthful. I hazard the guess, Madame Tentaillon, that tum-

bling is a healthful way of life. And have you never done anything else but tumble?"

"Before I learned that, I used to steal," answered Jean-Marie gravely.

"Upon my word!" cried the doctor. "You are a nice little man for your age. Madame, when my confrère comes from Bourron, you will communicate my unfavorable opinion. I leave the case in his hands; but, of course, on any alarming symptom—above all if there should be a sign of rally—do not hesitate to knock me up. I am a doctor no longer, I thank God; but I have been one. Good night, madame! Good sleep to you, Jean-Marie."

CHAPTER II.

MORNING TALK.

Doctor Desprez always rose early. Before the smoke rose, before the first cart rattled over the bridge to the day's labor in the fields, he was to be found wandering in his garden. Now he would pick a bunch of grapes; now he would eat a big pear under the trellis; now he would draw all sorts of fancies on the path with the end of his cane; now he would go down and watch the river running endlessly past the timber landing place at which he moored his boat. There was no time, he used to say, for making theories like the early morning. "I rise earlier than any one else in the village," he once boasted. "It is a fair consequence that I know more and wish to do less with my knowledge."

The doctor was a connoisseur of sunrises and loved a good theatrical effect to usher in the day. He had a theory of dew, by which he could predict the weather. Indeed, most things served him to that end: the sound of the bells from all the neighboring villages, the smell of the forest, the visits and the behavior of both birds and fishes, the look of the plants in his garden, the dis-

position of cloud, the color of the light, and last, although not least, the arsenal of meteorological instruments in a louver-boarded hutch upon the lawn. Ever since he had settled at Gretz he had been growing more and more into the local meteorologist, the unpaid champion of the local climate. He thought at first there was no place so healthful in the arrondissement. By the end of the second year he protested there was none so wholesome in the whole department. And for some time before he met Jean-Marie he had been prepared to challenge all France and the better part of Europe for a rival to his chosen spot.

"Doctor," he would say—"doctor is a foul word. It should not be used to ladies. It implies disease. I remark it, as a flaw in our civilization, that we have not the proper horror of disease. Now I, for my part, have washed my hands of it; I have renounced my laureation; I am no doctor; I am only a worshiper of the true goddess Hygeia. Ah, believe me, it is she who has the cestus! And here, in this exiguous hamlet, has she placed her shrine; here she dwells and lavishes her gifts; here I walk with her in the early morning, and she shows me how strong she has made the peasants, how fruitful she has made the fields, how the trees grow up tall and comely under her eyes, and the fishes in the river become clean and agile at her presence. Rheumatism!" he would cry, on some malapert interruption. "Oh, yes, I believe we do have a little rheumatism. That could hardly be avoided, you know, on a river. And, of course, the place stands a little low, and the meadows are marshy, there's no doubt. But, my dear sir, look at Bourron! Bourron stands high; Bourron is close to the forest; plenty of ozone there, you would say. Well, compared with Gretz, Bourron is a perfect shambles."

The morning after he had been sum-

moned to the dying mountebank, the doctor visited the wharf at the tail of his garden and had a long look at the running water. This he called prayer; but whether his adorations were addressed to the goddess Hygeia or some more orthodox deity never plainly appeared. For he had uttered doubtful oracles, sometimes declaring that a river was the type of bodily health, sometimes extolling it as the great moral preacher, continually preaching peace, continuity, and diligence to man's tormented spirits. After he had watched a mile or so of the clear water running by before his eyes, seen a fish or two come to the surface with a gleam of silver, and sufficiently admired the long shadows of the trees falling half across the river from the opposite bank, with patches of moving sunlight in between, he strolled once more up the garden and through his house into the street, feeling cool and renovated.

The sound of his feet upon the causeway began the business of the day, for the village was still sound asleep. The church tower looked very airy in the sunlight; a few birds that turned about it seemed to swim in an atmosphere of more than usual rarity; and the doctor, walking in long, transparent shadows, filled his lungs amply and proclaimed himself well contented with the morning.

On one of the posts before Tentailon's carriage entry he espied a little, dark figure perched in a meditative attitude, and immediately recognized Jean-Marie.

"Aha!" he said, stopping before him humorously, with a hand on either knee. "So we rise early in the morning, do we? It appears to me that we have all the vices of a philosopher."

The boy got to his feet and made a grave salutation.

"And how is our patient?" asked Desprez.

It appeared the patient was about the same.

"And why do you rise early in the morning?" he pursued.

Jean-Marie, after a long silence, confessed that he hardly knew.

"You hardly know?" repeated Desprez.

"We hardly know anything, my man, until we try to learn. Interrogate your consciousness. Come, push me this inquiry home. Do you like it?"

"Yes," said the boy slowly; "yes, I like it."

"And why do you like it?" continued the doctor. "We are now pursuing the Socratic method. Why do you like it?"

"It is quiet," answered Jean-Marie, "and I have nothing to do, and then I feel as if I were good."

Doctor Desprez took a seat on the spot at the opposite side. He was beginning to take an interest in the talk, for the boy plainly thought before he spoke and tried to answer truly. "It appears you have a taste for feeling good," said the doctor. "Now, there you puzzle me extremely, for I thought you said you were a thief, and the two are incompatible."

"Is it very bad to steal?" asked Jean-Marie.

"Such is the general opinion, little boy," replied the doctor.

"No, but I mean as I stole!" exclaimed the other. "For I had no choice. I think it is surely right to have bread; it must be right to have bread, there comes so plain a want for it. And then they beat me cruelly if I returned with nothing," he added. "I was not ignorant of right and wrong, for before that I had been well taught by a priest, who was very kind to me." The doctor made a horrible grimace at the word "priest." "But it seemed to me, when one had nothing to eat and was beaten, it was a different affair. I would not have stolen for tarts, I believe; but any one would steal for baker's bread."

"And I suppose," said the doctor,

with a rising sneer, "you prayed God to forgive you and explained the case to Him at length."

"Why, sir?" asked Jean-Marie. "I do not see."

"Your priest would see, however," retorted Desprez.

"Would he?" asked the boy, troubled for the first time. "I should have thought God would have known."

"Eh?" snarled the doctor.

"I should have thought God would have understood me," replied the other. "You do not, I see; but then it was God that made me think so, was it not?"

"Little boy, little boy," said Doctor Desprez, "I told you already you had the vices of philosophy; if you display the virtues also, I must go. I am a student of the blessed laws of health, an observer of plain and temperate nature in her common walks, and I cannot preserve my equanimity in presence of a monster. Do you understand?"

"No, sir," said the boy.

"I will make my meaning clear to you," replied the doctor. "Look there at the sky—behind the belfry first, where it is so light, and then up and up, turning your chin back, right to the top of the dome, where it is already as blue as at noon. Is not that a beautiful color? Does it not please the heart? We have seen it all our lives, until it has grown in with our familiar thoughts. Now"—changing his tone—"suppose that sky to become suddenly of a live and fiery amber, like the color of clear coals, and growing scarlet toward the top—I do not say it would be any the less beautiful, but would you like it as well?"

"I suppose not," answered Jean-Marie.

"Neither do I like you," returned the doctor roughly. "I hate all odd people, and you are the most curious little boy in all the world."

Jean-Marie seemed to ponder for a while, and then he raised his head again and looked over at the doctor with an air of candid inquiry. "But are not you a very curious gentleman?" he asked.

The doctor threw away his stick, bounded on the boy, clasped him to his bosom, and kissed him on both cheeks.

"Admirable, admirable imp!" he cried. "What a morning, what an hour for a theorist of forty-two! No," he continued, apostrophizing heaven, "I did not know that such boys existed; I was ignorant they made them so; I had doubted of my race, and now—It is like," he added, picking up his stick, "like a lovers' meeting. I have bruised my favorite staff in that moment of enthusiasm. The injury, however, is not grave." He caught the boy looking at him in obvious wonder, embarrassment, and alarm. "Hullo!" said he. "Why do you look at me like that? Egad, I believe the boy despises me. Do you despise me, boy?"

"Oh, no," replied Jean-Marie seriously; "only I do not understand."

"You must excuse me, sir," returned the doctor with gravity; "I am still so young. Oh, hang him!" he added to himself. And he took his seat again and observed the boy sardonically. "He has spoiled the quiet of my morning," thought he. "I shall be nervous all day and have a febricule when I digest. Let me compose myself." And so he dismissed his preoccupations by an effort of the will which he had long practiced, and let his soul roam abroad in the contemplation of the morning. He inhaled the air, tasting it critically as a connoisseur tastes a vintage, and prolonging the expiration with hygienic gusto. He counted the little flecks of cloud along the sky. He followed the movements of the birds round the church tower—making long sweeps, hanging poised, or turning airy somersaults in fancy, and beating the wind with imaginary pinions. And in this

way he regained peace of mind and animal composure, conscious of his limbs, conscious of the sight of his eyes, conscious that the air had a cool taste, like a fruit, at the top of his throat; and at last, in complete abstraction, he began to sing. The doctor had but one air—"Malbrouck s'en va-t-en guerre"—even with that he, was on terms of mere politeness, and his musical exploits were always reserved for moments when he was alone and entirely happy.

He was recalled to earth rudely by a pained expression on the boy's face.

"What do you think of my singing?" he inquired, stopping in the middle of a note; and then, after he had waited some little while and received no answer, "What do you think of my singing?" he repeated imperiously.

"I do not like it," faltered Jean-Marie.

"Oh, come!" cried the doctor. "Possibly you are a performer yourself?"

"I sing better than that," replied the boy.

The doctor eyed him for some seconds in stupefaction. He was aware that he was angry, and blushed for himself in consequence, which made him angrier.

"If this is how you address your master!" he said at last, with a shrug and a flourish of his arms.

"I do not speak to him at all," returned the boy. "I do not like him."

"Then you like me?" snapped Doctor Desprez with unusual eagerness.

"I do not know," answered Jean-Marie.

The doctor rose.

"I shall wish you a good morning," he said. "You are too much for me. Perhaps you have blood in your veins, perhaps celestial ichor, or perhaps you circulate nothing more gross than respirable air; but of one thing I am inexpugnably assured: that you are no human being. No, boy"—shaking his

stick at him—"you are not a human being. Write, write it in your memory—I am not a human being—I have no pretension to be a human being—I am a deva, a dream, an angel, an acrostic, an illusion—what you please, but not a human being." And so accept my humble salutations and farewell!"

And with that the doctor made off along the street in some emotion, and the boy stood, mentally gaping, where he left him.

CHAPTER III.

THE ADOPTION.

Madame Desprez, who answered to the Christian name of Anastasie, presented an agreeable type of her sex; exceedingly wholesome to look upon, a stout *brune*, with cool, smooth cheeks, steady, dark eyes, and hands that neither art nor nature could improve. She was the sort of person over whom adversity passes like a summer cloud; she might, in the worst of conjunctions, knit her brows into one vertical furrow for a moment, but the next it would be gone. She had much of the placidity of a contented nun, with little of her piety, however, for Anastasie was of a very mundane nature, fond of oysters and old wine and somewhat bold pleasantries, and devoted to her husband for her own sake rather than for his. She was imperturbably good-natured, but had no idea of self-sacrifice. To live in that pleasant old house, with a green garden behind and bright flowers about the window, to eat and drink of the best, to gossip with a neighbor for a quarter of an hour, never to wear stays or a dress except when she went to Fontamebleau shopping, to be kept in a continual supply of racy novels, and to be married to Doctor Desprez and have no ground of jealousy, filled the cup of her nature to the brim. Those who had known the doctor in bachelor days, when he had aired quite a many theories, but

of a different order, attributed his present philosophy to the study of Anastasie. It was her brute enjoyment that he rationalized and perhaps vainly imitated.

Madame Desprez was an artist in the kitchen, and made coffee to a nicety. She had a knack of tidiness, with which she had infected the doctor; everything was in its place; everything capable of polish shone gloriously; and dust was a thing banished from her empire. Aline, their single servant, had no other business in the world but to scour and burnish. So Doctor Desprez lived in his house like a fatted calf, warmed and cosseted to his heart's content.

The midday meal was excellent. There was a ripe melon, a fish from the river in a memorable Béarnaise sauce, a fat fowl in a fricassee, and a dish of asparagus, followed by some fruit. The doctor drank half a bottle *plus* one glass, the wife, half a bottle *minus* the same quantity, which was a marital privilege, of an excellent Côte-Rôtie, seven years old. Then the coffee was brought, and a flask of Chartreuse for madame, for the doctor despised and distrusted such decoctions; and then Aline left the wedded pair to the pleasures of memory and digestion.

"It is a very fortunate circumstance, my cherished one," observed the doctor—"this coffee is adorable—a very fortunate circumstance upon the whole—Anastasie, I beseech you, go without that poison for to-day; only one day, and you will feel the benefit, I pledge my reputation."

"What is this fortunate circumstance, my friend?" inquired Anastasie, not heeding his protest, which was of daily recurrence.

"That we have no children, my beautiful," replied the doctor. "I think of it more and more as the years go on, and with more and more gratitude toward the Power that dispenses such afflictions. Your health, my darling, my

studious quiet, our little kitchen delicacies, how they would all have suffered, how they would all have been sacrificed! And for what? Children are the last word of human imperfection. Health flees before their face. They cry, my dear; they put vexatious questions; they demand to be fed, to be washed, to be educated, to have their noses blown; and then, when the time comes, they break our hearts, as I break this piece of sugar. A pair of professed egoists, like you and me, should avoid offspring, like an infidelity."

"Indeed!" said she, and she laughed. "Now, that is like you—to take credit for the thing you could not help."

"My dear," returned the doctor solemnly, "we might have adopted."

"Never!" cried madame. "Never, doctor, with my consent. If the child were my own flesh and blood, I would not say so. But to take another person's indiscretion on my shoulders, my dear friend, I have too much sense."

"Precisely," replied the doctor. "We both had. And I am all the better pleased with our wisdom, because—because——" He looked at her sharply.

"Because what?" she asked, with a faint premonition of danger.

"Because I have found the right person," said the doctor firmly, "and shall adopt him this afternoon."

Anastasie looked at him out of a mist.

"You have lost your reason," she said, and there was a clang in her voice that seemed to threaten trouble.

"Not so, my dear," he replied; "I retain its complete exercise. To the proof: instead of attempting to cloak my inconsistency, I have, by way of preparing you, thrown it into strong relief. You will there, I think, recognize the philosopher who has the ecstasy to call you wife. The fact is, I have been reckoning all this while without an accident. I never thought to find a son of my own. Now, last night I found

one. Do not unnecessarily alarm yourself, my dear; he is not a drop of blood to me that I know. It is his mind, darling, his mind that calls me father."

"His mind!" she repeated with a titter between scorn and hysterics. "His mind, indeed! Henri, is this an idiotic pleasantry, or are you mad? His mind! And what of my mind?"

"Truly," replied the doctor with a shrug, "you have your finger on the hitch. He will be strikingly antipathetic to my beautiful Anastasie. She will never understand him; he will never understand her. You married the animal side of my nature, dear; and it is on the spiritual side that I find my affinity for Jean-Marie. So much so that, to be perfectly frank, I stand in some awe of him myself. You will easily perceive that I am announcing a calamity for you. Do not," he broke out in tones of real solicitude, "do not give way to tears after a meal, Anastasie. You will certainly give yourself a false digestion."

Anastasie controlled herself.

"You know how willing I am to humor you," she said, "in all reasonable matters. But on this point——"

"My dear love," interrupted the doctor, eager to prevent a refusal, "who wished to leave Paris? Who made me give up cards and the opera and the boulevard and my social relations and all that was my life before I knew you? Have I been faithful? Have I been obedient? Have I not borne my doom with cheerfulness? In all honesty, Anastasie, have I not a right to a stipulation on my side? I have, and you know it. I stipulate my son."

Anastasie was aware of defeat; she struck her colors instantly.

"You will break my heart," she sighed.

"Not in the least," said he. "You will feel a trifling inconvenience for a month, just as I did when I was first brought to this vile hamlet; then your admirable sense and temper will prevail,

and I see you already as content as ever, and making your husband the happiest of men."

"You know I can refuse you nothing," she said, with a last flicker of resistance; "nothing that will make you truly happier. But will this? Are you sure, my husband? Last night, you say, you found him! He may be the worst of humbugs."

"I think not," replied the doctor. "But do not suppose me so unwary as to adopt him out of hand. I am, I flatter myself, a finished man of the world; I have had all possibilities in view; my plan is contrived to meet them all. I take the lad as stable boy. If he pilfer, if he grumble, if he desire to change, I shall see I was mistaken; I shall recognize him for no son of mine, and send him tramping."

"You will never do so when the time comes," said his wife; "I know your good heart."

She reached out her hand to him, with a sigh; the doctor smiled as he took it and carried it to his lips; he had gained his point with greater ease than he had dared hope; for perhaps the twentieth time he had proved the efficacy of his trusty argument, his Excalibur, the hint of a return to Paris. Six months in the capital, for a man of the doctor's antecedents and relations, implied no less a calamity than total ruin. Anastasie had saved the remainder of his fortune by keeping him strictly in the country. The very name of Paris put her in a blue fear, and she would have allowed her husband to keep a menagerie in the back garden, let alone adopting a stable boy, rather than permit the question of return to be discussed.

About four of the afternoon the mountebank rendered up his ghost; he had never been conscious since his seizure. Doctor Desprez was present at his last passage, and declared the farce over. Then he took Jean-Marie by the shoulder and led him out into the inn

garden where there was a convenient bench beside the river. Here he sat him down and made the boy place himself on his left.

"Jean-Marie," he said very gravely, "this world is exceedingly vast; and even France, which is only a small corner of it, is a great place for a little lad like you. Unfortunately, it is full of eager, shouldering people moving on; and there are very few bakers' shops for so many eaters. Your master is dead; you are not fit to gain a living by yourself; you do not wish to steal? No. Your situation, then, is undesirable; it is, for the moment, critical. On the other hand, you behold in me a man not old, though elderly, still enjoying the youth of the heart and the intelligence; a man of instruction, easily situated in this world's affairs, keeping a good table—a man, neither as friend nor host, to be despised. I offer you your food and clothes, and to teach you lessons in the evening which will be infinitely more to the purpose for a lad of your stamp than those of all the priests in Europe. I propose no wages, but if ever you take a thought to leave me, the door shall be open, and I will give you a hundred francs to start the world upon. In return, I have an old horse and chaise, which you would very speedily learn to clean and keep in order. Do not hurry yourself to answer, and take it or leave it as you judge right. Only remember this, that I am no sentimentalist or charitable person, but a man who lives rigorously to himself, and that if I make the proposal, it is for my own ends—it is because I perceive clearly an advantage to myself. And now, reflect."

"I shall be very glad. I do not see what else I can do. I thank you, sir, most kindly, and I will try to be useful," said the boy.

"Thank you," said the doctor warmly, rising at the same time and wiping his brow, for he had suffered agonies while

the thing hung in the wind. A refusal, after the scene at noon, would have placed him in a ridiculous light before Anastasie. "How hot and heavy is the evening, to be sure! I have always had a fancy to be a fish in summer, Jean-Marie, here in the Loing beside Gretz. I should lie under a water lily and listen to the bells, which must sound most delicately down below. That would be a life—do you not think so too?"

"Yes," said Jean-Marie.

"Thank God, you have imagination!" cried the doctor, embracing the boy with his usual effusive warmth, though it was a proceeding that seemed to disconcert the sufferer almost as much as if he had been an English schoolboy of the same age. "And now," he added, "I will take you to my wife."

Madame Desprez sat in the dining room in a cool wrapper. All the blinds were down, and the tile floor had been recently sprinkled with water; her eyes were half shut, but she affected to be reading a novel as they entered. Though she was a bustling woman, she enjoyed repose between whiles and had a remarkable appetite for sleep.

The doctor went through a solemn form of introduction, adding, for the benefit of both parties, "You must try to like each other for my sake."

"He is very pretty," said Anastasie. "Will you kiss me, my pretty little fellow?"

The doctor was furious and dragged her into the passage.

"Are you a fool, Anastasie?" he said. "What is all this I hear about the tact of women? Heaven knows I have not met with it in my experience. You address my little philosopher as if he were an infant. He must be spoken to with more respect, I tell you; he must not be kissed and Georgy-porgyed like an ordinary child."

"I only did it to please you, I am sure," replied Anastasie, "but I will try to do better."

The doctor apologized for his warmth.

"But I do wish him," he continued, "to feel at home among us. And really your conduct was so idiotic, my cherished one, and so utterly and distantly out of place, that a saint might have been pardoned a little vehemence in disapproval. Do, do try—if it is possible for a woman to understand young people—but of course it is not, and I waste my breath. Hold your tongue as much as possible at least, and observe my conduct narrowly; it will serve you for a model."

Anastasie did as she was bidden, and considered the doctor's behavior. She observed that he embraced the boy three times in the course of the evening, and managed generally to confound and abash the little fellow out of speech and appetite. But she had the true womanly heroism in little affairs. Not only did she refrain from the cheap revenge of exposing the doctor's errors to himself, but she did her best to remove their ill effect on Jean-Marie. When Desprez went out for his last breath of air before retiring for the night, she came over to the boy's side and took his hand.

"You must not be surprised nor frightened by my husband's manners," she said. "He is the kindest of men, but so clever that he is sometimes difficult to understand. You will soon grow used to him, and then you will love him, for that nobody can help. As for me, you may be sure I shall try to make you happy, and will not bother you at all. I think we should be excellent friends, you and I. I am not clever, but I am very good-natured. Will you give me a kiss?"

He held up his face, and she took him in her arms and then began to cry. The woman had spoken in complaisance, but she had warmed to her own words, and tenderness followed. The doctor, entering, found them enlaced; he con-

cluded that his wife was in fault, and he was just beginning, in an awful voice, "Anastasie——" when she looked up at him, smiling, with an upraised finger; and he held his peace, wondering, while she led the boy to his attic.

CHAPTER IV.

THE EDUCATION OF A PHILOSOPHER.

The installation of the adopted stable boy was thus happily effected, and the wheels of life continued to run smoothly in the doctor's house. Jean-Marie did his horse-and-carriage duty in the morning, sometimes helped in the housework, sometimes walked abroad with the doctor, to drink wisdom from the fountainhead, and was introduced at night to the sciences and the dead tongues. He retained his singular placidity of mind and manner; he was rarely in fault; but he made only a very partial progress in his studies, and remained much of a stranger in the family.

The doctor was a pattern of regularity. All forenoon he worked on his great book, the "Comparative Pharmacopœia, or Historical Dictionary of all Medicines," which as yet consisted principally of slips of paper and pins. When finished, it was to fill many personable volumes and to combine antiquarian interest with professional utility. But the doctor was studious of literary graces and the picturesque; an anecdote, a touch of manners, a moral qualification, or a sounding epithet was sure to be preferred before a piece of science; a little more, and he would have written the "Comparative Pharmacopœia" in verse! The article "Mumma," for instance, was already complete, though the remainder of the work had not progressed beyond the letter A. It was exceedingly copious and entertaining, written with quaintness and color, exact, erudite, a literary article; but it would hardly have afforded guidance to the practicing physician of

to-day. The feminine good sense of his wife had led her to point this out with uncompromising sincerity; for the dictionary was duly read aloud to her, betwixt sleep and waking, as it proceeded toward an infinitely distant completion; and the doctor was a little sore on the subject of mummies, and sometimes resented an allusion with asperity.

After the midday meal and a proper period of digestion, he walked, sometimes alone, sometimes accompanied by Jean-Marie, for madame would have preferred any hardship rather than walk.

She was, as I have said, a very busy person, continually occupied about material comforts, and ready to drop asleep over a novel the instant she was disengaged. This was the less objectionable, as she never snored or grew distempered in complexion when she slept. On the contrary, she looked the very picture of luxurious and appetizing ease, and woke without a start to the perfect possession of her faculties. I am afraid she was greatly an animal, but she was a very nice animal to have about. In this way she had little to do with Jean-Marie; but the sympathy which had been established between them on the first night remained unbroken; they held occasional conversations, mostly on household matters; to the extreme disappointment of the doctor, they occasionally sallied off together to that temple of debasing superstition, the village church; madame and he, both in their Sunday's best, drove twice a month to Fontainebleau and returned laden with purchases; and, in short, although the doctor still continued to regard them as irreconcilably antipathetic, their relation was as intimate, friendly, and confidential as their natures suffered.

I fear, however, that in her heart of hearts madame kindly despised and pitied the boy. She had no admiration for his class of virtues; she liked a smart, polite, forward, roguish sort of boy,

cap in hand, light of foot, meeting the eye; she liked volubility, charm, a little vice—the promise of a second Doctor Desprez. And it was her indefeasible belief that Jean-Marie was dull. "Poor, dear boy," she had said once, "how sad it is that he should be so stupid!" She had never repeated that remark, for the doctor had raged like a wild bull, denouncing the brutal bluntness of her mind, bemoaning his own fate to be so unequally mated with an ass, and, what touched Anastasie more nearly, menacing the table china by the fury of his gesticulations. But she adhered silently to her opinion; and when Jean-Marie was sitting, stolid, blank, but not unhappy, over his unfinished tasks, she would snatch her opportunity in the doctor's absence, go over to him, put her arms about his neck, lay her cheek to his, and communicate her sympathy with his distress. "Do not mind," she would say; "I, too, am not at all clever, and I can assure you that it makes no difference in life."

The doctor's view was naturally different. That gentleman never wearied of the sound of his own voice, which was, to say the truth, agreeable enough to hear. He now had a listener, who was not so cynically indifferent as Anastasie, and who sometimes put him on his mettle by the most relevant objections. Besides, was he not educating the boy? And education, philosophers are agreed, is the most philosophical of duties. What can be more heavenly to poor mankind than to have one's hobby grow into a duty to the state? Then, indeed, do the ways of life become ways of pleasantness. Never had the doctor seen reason to be more content with his endowments. Philosophy flowed smoothly from his lips. He was so agile a dialectician that he could trace his nonsense, when challenged, back to some root in sense, and prove it to be a sort of flower upon his system. He slipped out of antinomies like a fish, and left

his disciple marveling at the rabbi's depth.

Moreover, deep down in his heart the doctor was disappointed with the ill success of his more formal education. A boy, chosen by so acute an observer for his aptitude, and guided along the path of learning by so philosophic an instructor, was bound, by the nature of the universe, to make a more obvious and lasting advance. Now Jean-Marie was slow in all things, impenetrable in others, and his power of forgetting was fully on a level with his power to learn. Therefore the doctor cherished his peripatetic lectures, to which the boy attended, which he generally appeared to enjoy, and by which he often profited.

Many and many were the talks they had together; and health and moderation proved the subject of the doctor's divagations. To these he lovingly returned.

"I lead you," he would say, "by the green pastures. My system, my beliefs, my medicines, are resumed in one phrase—to avoid excess. Blessed nature, healthy, temperate nature, abhors and exterminates excess. Human law, in this matter, imitates at a great distance her provisions; and we must strive to supplement the efforts of the law. Yes, boy, we must be a law to ourselves and for our neighbors—*lex armata*—armed, emphatic, tyrannous law. If you see a crapulous human ruin snuffing, dash him from his box! The judge, though in a way an admission of disease, is less offensive to me than either the doctor or the priest. Above all the doctor—the doctor and the purulent trash and garbage of his pharmacopeia! Pure air—from the neighborhood of a pinetum for the sake of the turpentine—unadulterated wine, and the reflections of an unsophisticated spirit in the presence of the works of nature—these, my boy, are the best medical appliances and the best religious comforts. Devote yourself to these. Hark! there are the bells of

Bourron. The wind is in the north; it will be fair. How clear and airy is the sound! The nerves are harmonized and quieted; the mind attuned to silence; and observe how easily and regularly beats the heart! Your unenlightened doctor would see nothing in these sensations, and yet you yourself perceive they are a part of health. Did you remember your cinchona this morning? Good! Cinchona also is a work of nature; it is, after all, only the bark of a tree which we might gather for ourselves if we lived in the locality. What a world is this! Though a professed atheist, I delight to bear my testimony to the world. Look at the gratuitous remedies and pleasures that surround our path! The river runs by the garden end, our bath, our fish pond, our natural system of drainage. There is a well in the court which sends up sparkling water from the earth's very heart, clean, cool, and, with a little wine, most wholesome. The district is notorious for its salubrity; rheumatism is the only prevalent complaint, and I myself have never had a touch of it. I tell you—and my opinion is based upon the coldest, clearest processes of reason—if I, if you desired, to leave this home of pleasures, it would be the duty, it would be the privilege, of our best friend to prevent us with a pistol bullet."

One beautiful June day they sat upon the hill outside the village. The river, as blue as heaven, shone here and there among the foliage. The indefatigable birds turned and flickered about Gretz church tower. A healthy wind blew from over the forest, and the sound of innumerable thousands of treetops and innumerable millions on millions of green leaves was abroad in the air, and filled the ear with something between whispered speech and singing. It seemed as if every blade of grass must hide a cigale; and the fields rang merrily with their music, jingling far and

near as with the sleighbells of the fairy queen. From their station on the slope the eye embraced a large space of poplared plain upon the one hand, the waving hilltops of the forest on the other, and Gretz itself in the middle, a handful of roofs. Under the bestriding arch of the blue heavens, the place seemed dwindled to a toy. It seemed incredible that people dwelt, and could find room to turn or air to breathe, in such a corner of the world. The thought came home to the boy, perhaps for the first time, and he gave it words.

"How small it looks!" he sighed.

"Aye," replied the doctor, "small enough now. Yet it was once a walled city; thriving, full of furred burgesses and men in armor, humming with affairs—with tall spires, for aught that I know, and portly towers along the battlements. A thousand chimneys ceased smoking at the curfew bell. There were gibbets at the gate as thick as scarecrows. In time of war, the assault swarmed against it with ladders, the arrows fell like leaves, the defenders sallied hotly over the drawbridge, each side uttered its cry as they plied their weapons. Do you know that the walls extended as far as the commanderie? Tradition so reports. Alas, what a long way off is all this confusion—nothing left of it but my quiet words spoken in your ear—and the town itself shrunk to the hamlet underneath us! By and by came the English wars—you shall hear more of the English, a stupid people, who sometimes blundered into good—and Gretz was taken, sacked, and burned. It is the history of many towns; but Gretz never rose again; it was never rebuilt; its ruins were a quarry to serve the growth of rivals; and the stones of Gretz are now erect along the streets of Nemours. It gratifies me that our old house was the first to rise after the calamity; when the town had come to an end, it inaugurated the hamlet."

"I, too, am glad of that," said Jean-Marie.

"It should be the temple of the humbler virtues," responded the doctor with a savory gusto. "Perhaps one of the reasons why I love my little hamlet as I do is that we have a similar history, she and I. Have I told you that I was once rich?"

"I do not think so," answered Jean-Marie. "I do not think I should have forgotten. I am sorry you should have lost your fortune."

"Sorry?" cried the doctor. "Why, I find I have scarce begun your education, after all. Listen to me! Would you rather live in the old Gretz or in the new, free from the alarms of war, with the green country at the door, without noise, passports, the exactions of the soldiery, or the jangle of the curfew bell to send us off to bed by sundown?"

"I suppose I should prefer the new," replied the boy.

"Precisely," returned the doctor; "so do I. And, in the same way, I prefer my present moderate fortune to my former wealth. Golden mediocrity! cried the adorable ancients; and I subscribe to their enthusiasm. Have I not good wine, good food, good air, the fields and the forest for my walk, a house, an admirable wife, a boy whom I protest I cherish like a son? Now, if I were still rich, I should indubitably make my residence in Paris—you know Paris—Paris and paradise are not convertible terms. This pleasant noise of the wind streaming among leaves changed into the grinding Babel of the street, the stupid glare of plaster substituted for this quiet pattern of greens and grays, the nerves shattered, the digestion falsified—picture the fall! Already you perceive the consequences; the mind is stimulated, the heart steps to a different measure, and the man is himself no longer. I have passionately studied myself—the true business of

philosophy. I know my character as the musician knows the ventages of his flute. Should I return to Paris, I should ruin myself gambling; nay, I go further—I should break the heart of my Anastasie with infidelities."

This was too much for Jean-Marie. That a place should so transform the most excellent of men transcended his belief. Paris, he protested, was even an agreeable place of residence. "Nor when I lived in that city did I feel much difference," he pleaded.

"What!" cried the doctor. "Did you not steal when you were there?"

But the boy could never be brought to see that he had done anything wrong when he stole. Nor, indeed, did the doctor think he had; but that gentleman was never very scrupulous when in want of a retort.

"And now," he concluded, "do you begin to understand? My only friends were those who ruined me. Gretz has been my academy, my sanitarium, my heaven of innocent pleasures. If millions are offered me, I wave them back: *Retro, Sathanas!*—evil one, begone! Fix your mind on my example; despise riches, avoid the debasing influence of cities. Hygiene—hygiene and mediocrity of fortune—these be your watchwords during life!"

The doctor's system of hygiene strikingly coincided with his tastes; and his picture of the perfect life was a faithful description of the one he was leading at the time. But it is easy to convince a boy, when you supply all the facts for the discussion. And, besides, there was one thing admirable in the philosophy, and that was the enthusiasm of the philosopher. There was never any one more vigorously determined to be pleased; and if he was not a great logician, and so had no right to convince the intellect, he was certainly something of a poet, and had a fascination to seduce the heart. What he could not achieve in his customary humor of

a radiant admiration of himself and his circumstances, he sometimes effected in his fits of gloom.

"Boy," he would say, "avoid me to-day. If I were superstitious, I should even beg for an interest in your prayers. I am in the black fit; the evil spirit of King Saul, the hag of the merchant Abudah, the personal devil of the medieval monk, is with me—is in me"—tapping on his breast. "The vices of my nature are now uppermost; innocent pleasures woo me in vain; I long for Paris, for my wallowing in the mire. See," he would continue, producing a handful of silver, "I denude myself, I am not to be trusted with the price of a fare. Take it, keep it for me, squander it on deleterious candy, throw it in the deepest of the river—I will homologate your action. Save me from that part of myself which I disown. If you see me falter, do not hesitate; if necessary, wreck the train! I speak, of course, by a parable. Any extremity were better than for me to reach Paris alive."

Doubtless the doctor enjoyed these little scenes, as a variation in his part; they represented the Byronic element in the somewhat artificial poetry of his existence; but to the boy, though he was dimly aware of their theatricality, they represented more. The doctor made perhaps too little, the boy possibly too much, of the reality and gravity of these temptations.

One day a great light shone for Jean-Marie. "Could not riches be used well?" he asked.

"In theory, yes," replied the doctor. "But it is found in experience that no one does so. All the world imagine they will be exceptional when they grow wealthy; but possession is debasing, new desires spring up, and the silly taste for ostentation eats out the heart of pleasure."

"Then you might be better if you had less," said the boy.

"Certainly not," replied the doctor, but his voice quavered as he spoke.

"Why?" demanded pitiless innocence.

Doctor Desprez saw all the colors of the rainbow in a moment; the stable universe appeared to be about capsizing with him. "Because," said he—affecting deliberation after an obvious pause—"because I have formed my life for my present income. It is not good for men of my years to be violently dissevered from their habits."

That was a sharp brush. The doctor breathed hard, and fell into taciturnity for the afternoon. As for the boy, he was delighted with the resolution of his doubts; even wondered that he had not foreseen the obvious and conclusive answer. His faith in the doctor was a stout piece of goods. Desprez was inclined to be a sheet in the wind's eye after dinner, especially after Rhone wine, his favorite weakness. He would then remark on the warmth of his feeling for Anastasie, and with inflamed cheeks and a loose, flustered smile, debate upon all sorts of topics, and be feebly and indiscreetly witty. But the adopted stable boy would not permit himself to entertain a doubt that savored of ingratitude. It is quite true that a man may be a second father to you, and yet take too much to drink; but the best natures are ever slow to accept such truths.

The doctor thoroughly possessed his heart, but perhaps he exaggerated his influence over his mind. Certainly Jean-Marie adopted some of his master's opinions, but I have yet to learn that he ever surrendered one of his own. Convictions existed in him by divine right; they were virgin, unwrought, the brute metal of decision. He could add, others indeed, but he could not put away; neither did he care if they were perfectly agreed among themselves; and his spiritual pleasures had nothing to do with turning them over or justifying them in words. Words were with him a mere

accomplishment, like dancing. When he was by himself, his pleasures were almost vegetable. He would slip into the woods toward Achères, and sit in the mouth of a cave among gray birches. His soul stared straight out of his eyes; he did not move or think; sunlight, thin shadows moving in the wind, the edge of firs against the sky, occupied and bound his faculties. He was pure unity, spirit wholly abstracted. A single mood filled him, to which all the objects of sense contributed, as the colors of the spectrum merge and disappear in white light.

So while the doctor made himself drunk with words, the adopted stable boy bemused himself with silence.

CHAPTER V.

TREASURE-TROVE.

The doctor's carriage was a two-wheeled gig with a hood, a kind of vehicle in much favor among country doctors. On how many roads has one not seen it, a great way off between the poplars! In how many village streets, tied to a gatepost! This sort of chariot is affected—particularly at the trot—by a kind of pitching movement to and fro across the axle, which well entitles it to the style of a noddy. The hood describes a considerable arc against the landscape, with a solemnly absurd effect on the contemplative pedestrian. To ride in such a carriage cannot be numbered among the things that appertain to glory; but I have no doubt it may be useful in liver complaint. Thence, perhaps, its wide popularity among physicians.

One morning early, Jean-Marie led forth the doctor's noddy, opened the gate, and mounted to the driving seat. The doctor followed, arrayed from top to toe in spotless linen, armed with an immense flesh-colored umbrella, and girt with a botanical case on a baldric; and the equipage drove off smartly in a

breeze of its own provocation. They were bound for Franchard, to collect plants, with an eye to the "Comparative Pharmacopœia."

A little rattling on the open roads, and they came to the borders of the forest and struck into an unfrequented track; the noddy yawed softly over the sand, with an accompaniment of snapping twigs. There was a great, green, softly murmuring cloud of congregated foliage overhead. In the arcades of the forest the air retained the freshness of the night. The athletic bearing of the trees, each bearing its leafy mountain, pleased the mind like so many statues, and the lines of the trunk led the eye admiringly upward to where the extreme leaves sparkled in a patch of azure. Squirrels leaped in mid-air. It was a proper spot for a devotee of the goddess Hygeia.

"Have you been to Franchard, Jean-Marie?" inquired the doctor. "I fancy not."

"Never," replied the boy.

"It is a ruin in a gorge," continued Desprez, adopting his expository voice; "the ruin of a hermitage and chapel. History tells us much of Franchard; how the recluse was often slain by robbers; how he lived on a most insufficient diet; how he was expected to pass his days in prayer. A letter is preserved, addressed to one of these solitaries by the superior of his order, full of admirable hygienic advice, bidding him go from his book to praying, and so back again, for variety's sake, and when he was weary of both to stroll about his garden and observe the honeybees. It is to this day my own system. You must have often remarked me leaving the 'Pharmacopœia'—often even in the middle of a phrase—to come forth into the sun and air. I admire the writer of that letter from my heart; he was a man of thought on the most important subjects. But, indeed, had I lived in the Middle Ages—I am heartily

glad that I did not—I should have been an eremite myself—if I had not been a professed buffoon, that is. These were the only philosophical lives yet open: laughter or prayer; sneers, we might say, and tears. Until the sun of the Positive arose, the wise man had to make his choice between these two."

"I have been a buffoon, of course," observed Jean-Marie.

"I cannot imagine you to have excelled in your profession," said the doctor, admiring the boy's gravity. "Do you ever laugh?"

"Oh, yes," replied the other. "I laugh often. I am very fond of jokes."

"Singular being!" said Desprez. "But I divagate. I perceive in a thousand ways that I grow old. Franchard was at length destroyed in the English wars, the same that leveled Gretz. But—here is the point—the hermits—for there were already more than one—had foreseen the danger and carefully concealed the sacrificial vessels. These vessels were of monstrous value, Jean-Marie—monstrous value—priceless, we may say; exquisitely worked, of exquisite material. And now, mark me, they have never been found. In the reign of Louis Quatorze some fellows were digging hard by the ruins. Suddenly—tack!—the spade hit upon an obstacle. Imagine the men looking one to another; imagine how their hearts bounded, how their color came and went. It was a coffer, and in Franchard, the place of buried treasure! They tore it open like famished beasts. Alas! It was not the treasure; only some priestly robes, which, at the touch of the eating air, fell upon themselves and instantly wasted into dust. The perspiration of these good fellows turned cold upon them, Jean-Marie. I will pledge my reputation, if there was anything like a cutting wind, one or other had a pneumonia for his trouble."

"I should like to have seen them turning into dust," said Jean-Marie. "Oth-

erwise, I should not have cared so greatly."

"You have no imagination," cried the doctor. "Picture to yourself the scene. Dwell on the idea—a great treasure lying in the earth for centuries; the material for a giddy, copious, opulent existence not employed; dresses and exquisite pictures unseen; the swiftest galloping horses not stirring a hoof, arrested by a spell; women with the beautiful faculty of smiles, not smiling; cards, dice, opera singing, orchestras, castles, beautiful parks and gardens, big ships with a tower of sail cloth, all lying unborn in a coffin—and the stupid trees growing overhead in the sunlight, year after year. The thought drives one frantic."

"It is only money," replied Jean-Marie. "It would do harm."

"Oh, come!" cried Desprez. "That is philosophy; it is all very fine, but not to the point just now. And, besides, it is not 'only money,' as you call it; there are works of art in the question; the vessels were carved. You speak like a child. You weary me exceedingly, quoting my words out of all logical connection, like a parrakeet."

"And at any rate, we have nothing to do with it," returned the boy.

They struck the Route Ronde at that moment, and the sudden change to the rattling causeway combined, with the doctor's irritation, to keep him silent. The noddy jiggled along; the trees went by, looking silently, as if they had something on their minds. The Quadrilateral was passed; then came Franchard. They put up the horse at the little solitary inn, and went forth strolling; the gorge was dyed deeply with heather; the rocks and birches standing luminous in the sun. A great humming of bees about the flowers disposed Jean-Marie to sleep, and he sat down against a clump of heather, while the doctor went briskly to and fro, with quick turns, culling his simples.

The boy's head had fallen a little forward, his eyes were closed, his fingers had fallen lax about his knees, when a sudden cry called him to his feet. It was a strange sound, thin and brief; it fell dead, and silence returned as though it had never been interrupted. He had not recognized the doctor's voice; but, as there was no one else in all the valley, it was plainly the doctor who had given utterance to the sound. He looked right and left, and there was Desprez, standing in a niche between two boulders, and looking round on his adopted son with a countenance as white as paper.

"A viper!" cried Jean-Marie, running toward him. "A viper! You are bitten!"

The doctor came down heavily out of the cleft, and advanced in silence to meet the boy, whom he took roughly by the shoulder.

"I have found it," he said, with a gasp.

"A plant?" asked Jean-Marie.

Desprez had a fit of unnatural gaiety, which the rocks took up and mimicked.

"A plant!" he repeated scornfully. "Well—yes—a plant. And here," he added suddenly, showing his right hand, which he had hitherto concealed behind his back, "here is one of the bulbs."

Jean-Marie saw a dirty platter, coated with earth.

"That?" said he. "It is a plate!"

"It is a coach and horses," cried the doctor. "Boy," he continued, growing warmer, "I plucked away a great pad of moss from between these boulders, and disclosed a crevice; and when I looked in, what do you suppose I saw? I saw a house in Paris with a court and garden; I saw my wife shining with diamonds; I saw myself a deputy; I saw you—well, I—I saw your future," he concluded rather feebly. "I have just discovered America," he added.

"But what is it?" asked the boy.

"The treasure of Franchard!" cried the doctor; and, throwing his brown straw hat upon the ground, he whooped like an Indian and sprang upon Jean-Marie, whom he suffocated with embraces and bedewed with tears. Then he flung himself down among the heather and once more laughed until the valley rang.

But the boy had now an interest of his own, a boy's interest. No sooner was he released from the doctor's accolade than he ran to the boulders, sprang into the niche, and, thrusting his hand into the crevice, drew forth one after another, incrustated with the earth of ages, the flagons, candlesticks, and patens of the hermitage of Franchard. A casket came last, tightly shut and very heavy.

"Oh, what fun, what fun!" he cried.

But when he looked back at the doctor, who had followed close behind and was silently observing, the words died from his lips. Desprez was once more the color of ashes; his lips worked and trembled; a sort of bestial greed possessed him.

"This is childish," he said. "We lose precious time. Back to the inn, harness the trap, and bring it to yon bank. Run for your life, and remember—not one whisper. I stay here to watch."

Jean-Marie did as he was bid, though not without surprise. The noddy was brought round to the spot indicated, and the two gradually transported the treasure from its place of concealment to the boot below the driving seat. Once it was all stored the doctor recovered his gaiety.

"I pay my grateful duties to the genius of this dell," he said. "Oh, for a live coal, a heifer, and a jar of country wine! I am in the vein for sacrifice, for a superb libation. Well, and why not? We are at Franchard? English pale ale is to be had—not classi-

cal, indeed, but excellent. Boy, we shall drink ale."

"But I thought it was so unwholesome," said Jean-Marie, "and very dear besides."

"Fiddle-de-dee!" exclaimed the doctor gayly. "To the inn!"

And he stepped into the noddy, tossing his head, with an elastic, youthful air. The horse was turned, and in a few seconds they drew up beside the palings of the inn garden.

"Here," said Desprez, "here, near the stable, so that we may keep an eye upon things."

They tied the horse and entered the garden, the doctor singing, now in fantastic high notes, now producing deep reverberations from his chest. He took a seat, rapped loudly on the table, assailed the waiter with witticisms; and when the bottle of Bass was at length produced, far more charged with gas than the most delirious champagne, he filled out a long glassful of froth and pushed it over to Jean-Marie.

"Drink," he said; "drink deep."

"I would rather not," faltered the boy, true to his training.

"What?" thundered Desprez.

"I am afraid of it," said Jean-Marie; "my stomach——"

"Take it or leave it," interrupted Desprez fiercely; "but understand it once for all—there is nothing so contemptible as a precisian."

Here was a new lesson! The boy sat bemused, looking at the glass but not tasting it, while the doctor emptied and refilled his own, at first with clouded brow, but gradually yielding to the sun, the heady, prickling beverage, and his own predisposition to be happy.

"Once in a way," he said at last, by way of a concession to the boy's more rigorous attitude, "once in a way, and at so critical a moment, this ale is a nectar for the gods. The habit, indeed, is debasing; wine, the juice of the grape, is the true drink of the Frenchman, as

I have often had occasion to point out; and I do not know that I can blame you for refusing this outlandish stimulant. You can have some wine and cakes. Is the bottle empty? Well, we will not be proud; we will have pity on your glass."

The beer being done, the doctor chafed bitterly while Jean-Marie finished his cakes. "I burn to be gone," he said, looking at his watch. "Good God, how slow you eat!" And yet to eat slowly was his own particular prescription, the main secret of longevity!

His martyrdom, however, reached an end at last; the pair resumed their places in the buggy, and Desprez, leaning luxuriously back, announced his intention of proceeding to Fontainebleau. "To Fontainebleau?" repeated Jean-Marie.

"My words are always measured," said the doctor. "On!"

The doctor was driven through the glades of paradise; the air, the light, the shining leaves, the very movements of the vehicle, seemed to fall in tune with his golden meditations; with his head thrown back, he dreamed a series of sunny visions, ale and pleasure dancing in his veins. At last he spoke.

"I shall telegraph for Casimir," he said. "Good Casimir! A fellow of the lower order of intelligence, Jean-Marie, distinctly not creative, not poetic; and yet he will repay your study; his fortune is vast, and is entirely due to his own exertions. He is the very fellow to help us to dispose of our trinkets, find us a suitable house in Paris, and manage the details of our installation. Admirable Casimir, one of my oldest comrades! It was on his advice, I may add, that I invested my little fortune in Turkish bonds; when we have added these spoils of the mediaeval church to our stake in the Mohammedan empire, little boy, we shall positively roll among doubloons, positively roll! Beautiful forest," he cried,

"farewell! Though called to other scenes, I will not forget thee. Thy name is graven in my heart. Under the influence of prosperity I become dithyrambic, Jean-Marie. Such is the impulse of the natural soul; such was the constitution of primeval man. And I—well, I will not refuse the credit—I have preserved my youth like a virginity; another, who should have led the same snoozing, countrified existence for these years, another had become rusted, become stereotyped; but I, I praise my happy constitution, retain the spring unbroken. Fresh opulence and a new sphere of duties find me unabated in ardor and only more mature by knowledge. For this prospective change, Jean-Marie—it may probably have shocked you. Tell me now, did it not strike you as an inconsistency? Confess—it is useless to dissemble—it pained you?"

"Yes," said the boy.

"You see," returned the doctor, with sublime fatuity, "I read your thoughts! Nor am I surprised—your education is not yet complete; the higher duties of men have not been yet presented to you fully. A hint—till we have leisure—must suffice. Now that I am once more in possession of a modest competence; now that I have so long prepared myself in silent meditation, it becomes my superior duty to proceed to Paris. My scientific training, my undoubted command of language, mark me out for the service of my country. Modesty in such a case would be a snare. If sin were a philosophical expression, I should call it sinful. A man must not deny his manifest abilities, for that is to evade his obligations. I must be up and doing; I must be no skulker in life's battle."

So he rattled on, copiously greasing the joint of his inconsistency with words; while the boy listened silently, his eyes fixed on the horse, his mind seething. It was all lost eloquence; no

array of words could unsettle a belief of Jean-Marie's; and he drove into Fontainebleau filled with pity, horror, indignation, and despair.

In the town Jean-Marie was kept a fixture on the driving seat to guard the treasure, while the doctor, with a singular, slightly tipsy airiness of manner, fluttered in and out of cafés, where he shook hands with garrison officers and mixed an absinthe with the nicety of old experience; in and out of shops, from which he returned laden with costly fruits, real turtle, a magnificent piece of silk for his wife, a preposterous cane for himself, and a képi of the newest fashion for the boy; in and out of the telegraph office, whence he dispatched his telegram, and where, three hours later, he received an answer promising a visit on the morrow; and generally pervaded Fontainebleau with the first fine aroma of his divine good humor.

The sun was very low when they set forth again; the shadows of the forest trees extended across the broad white road that led them home; the penetrating odor of the evening wood had already arisen, like a cloud of incense, from that broad field of treetops; and even in the streets of the town, where the air had been baked all day between white walls, it came in whiffs and pulses, like a distant music. Halfway home, the last gold flicker vanished from a great oak upon the left; and when they came forth beyond the borders of the wood, the plain was already sunken in pearly grayness, and a great, pale moon came swinging skyward through the filmy poplars.

The doctor sang; the doctor whistled; the doctor talked. He spoke of the woods, and the wars, and the deposition of dew; he brightened and babbled of Paris; he soared into cloudy bombast on the glories of the political arena. All was to be changed; as the day departed, it took with it the vestiges of an outworn existence, and to-

morrow's sun was to inaugurate the new. "Enough," he cried, "of this life of maceration!" His wife—still beautiful, or he was sadly partial—was to be no longer buried; she should now shine before society. Jean-Marie would find the world at his feet; the roads open to success, wealth, honor, and posthumous renown. "And, oh, by the way," said he, "for God's sake keep your tongue quiet! You are, of course, a very silent fellow; it is a quality I gladly recognize in you—silence, golden silence! But this is a matter of gravity. No word must get abroad; none but the good Casimir is to be trusted; we shall probably dispose of the vessels in England."

"But are they not even ours?" the boy said, almost with a sob—it was the only time he had spoken.

"Ours in this sense, that they are nobody else's," replied the doctor. "But the state would have some claim. If they were stolen, for instance, we should be unable to demand their restitution; we should have no title; we should be unable even to communicate with the police. Such is the monstrous condition of the law. It is a mere instance of what remains to be done, of the injustices that may yet be righted by an ardent, active, and philosophical deputy."

Jean-Marie put his faith in Madame Desprez; and as they drove forward down the road from Bourron, between the rustling poplars, he prayed in his teeth, and whipped up the horse to an unusual speed. Surely, as soon as they arrived, madame would assert her character and bring this waking nightmare to an end.

Their entrance into Gretz was heralded and accompanied by a most furious barking; all the dogs in the village seemed to smell the treasure in the noddy. But there was no one in the street, save three lounging landscape painters at Tentaillon's door. Jean-

Marie opened the green gate and led in the horse and carriage; and almost at the same moment Madame Desprez came to the kitchen threshold with a lighted lantern, for the moon was not yet high enough to clear the garden walls.

"Close the gates, Jean-Marie!" cried the doctor, somewhat unsteadily alighting. "Anastasie, where is Aline?"

"She has gone to Montereau to see her parents," said madame.

"All is for the best!" exclaimed the doctor fervently. "Here, quick, come near to me; I do not wish to speak too loud," he continued. "Darling, we are wealthy!"

"Wealthy!" repeated the wife.

"I have found the treasure of Franchard," replied her husband. "See, here are the first fruits; a pineapple, a dress for my ever-beautiful—it will suit her—trust a husband's, trust a lover's, taste! Embrace me, darling! This grimy episode is over; the butterfly unfolds its painted wings. To-morrow Casimir will come; in a week we may be in Paris—happy at last! You shall have diamonds. Jean-Marie, take it out of the boot, with religious care, and bring it piece by piece into the dining room. We shall have plate at table! Darling, hasten and prepare this turtle; it will be a whet—it will be an addition to our meager ordinary. I myself will proceed to the cellar. We shall have a bottle of that little Beaujolais you like, and finish with the Hermitage; there are still three bottles left. Worthy wine for a worthy occasion."

"But, my husband, you put me in a whirl!" she cried. "I do not comprehend."

"The turtle, my adored, the turtle!" cried the doctor, and he pushed her toward the kitchen, lantern and all.

Jean-Marie stood dumfounded. He had pictured to himself a different scene—a more immediate protest, and his hope began to dwindle on the spot.

The doctor was everywhere, a little doubtful on his legs, perhaps, and now and then taking the wall with his shoulder, for it was long since he had tasted absinthe, and he was even then reflecting that the absinthe had been a misconception. Not that he regretted excess on such a glorious day, but he made a mental memorandum to beware; he must not, a second time, become the victim of a deleterious habit. He had his wine out of the cellar in a twinkling; he arranged the sacrificial vessels, some on the white tablecloth, some on the sideboard, still crusted with historic earth. He was in and out of the kitchen, plying Anastasie with vermouth, heating her with glimpses of the future, estimating their new wealth at ever larger figures; and before they sat down to supper, the lady's virtue had melted in the fire of his enthusiasm, her timidity had disappeared; she, too, had begun to speak disparagingly of the life at Gretz; and as she took her place and helped the soup, her eyes shone with the glitter of prospective diamonds.

All through the meal, she and the doctor made and unmade fairy plans. They bobbed and bowed and pledged each other. Their faces ran over with smiles; their eyes scattered sparkles, as they projected the doctor's political honors and the lady's drawing-room ovations.

"But you will not be a Red!" cried Anastasie.

"I am Left Center to the core," replied the doctor.

"Madame Gastein will present us—we shall find ourselves forgotten," said the lady.

"Never," protested the doctor. "Beauty and talent leave a mark."

"I have positively forgotten how to dress," she sighed.

"Darling, you make me blush," cried he. "Yours has been a tragic marriage."

"But your success—to see you appreciated, honored, your name in all the

papers, that will be more than pleasure—it will be heaven!" she cried.

"And once a week," said the doctor, archly scanning the syllables, "once a week—one good little game of *baccarat*?"

"Only once a week?" she questioned, threatening him with a finger.

"I swear it by my political honor!" cried he.

"I spoil you," she said, and gave him her hand. He covered it with kisses.

Jean-Marie escaped into the night. The moon swung high over Gretz. He went down to the garden end and sat on the jetty. The river ran by with eddies of oily silver and a low, monotonous song. Faint veils of mist moved among the poplars on the farther side. The reeds were quietly nodding. A hundred times already had the boy sat, on such a night, and watched the streaming river with untroubled fancy. And this perhaps was to be the last. He was to leave this familiar hamlet, this green, rustling country, this bright and quiet stream; he was to pass into the great city; his dear lady mistress was to move bedizened into salons; his good, garrulous, kind-hearted master to become a brawling deputy; and both be lost forever to Jean-Marie and their better selves. He knew his own defects; he knew he must sink into less and less consideration in the turmoil of a city life; sink more and more from the child into the servant. And he began dimly to believe the doctor's prophecies of evil. He could see a change in both. His generous incredulity failed him for this once; a child must have perceived that the Hermitage had completed what the absinthe had begun. If this were the first day, what would be the last? "If necessary, wreck the train," thought he, remembering the doctor's parable. He looked round on the delightful scene; he drank deep of the charmed night air, laden with the scent of hay. "If necessary, wreck the train," he re-

peated. And he rose and returned to the house.

CHAPTER VI.

A CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION IN TWO PARTS.

The next morning there was a most unusual outcry in the doctor's house. The last thing before going to bed, the doctor had locked up some valuables in the dining-room cupboard; and, behold, when he rose again, as he did about four o'clock, the cupboard had been broken open, and the valuables in question had disappeared. Madame and Jean-Marie were summoned from their rooms, and appeared in hasty toilets; they found the doctor raving, calling the heavens to witness and avenge his injury, pacing the room barefooted, with the tails of his night-shirt flitting as he turned.

"Gone!" he said. "The things are gone, the fortune gone! We are paupers once more. Boy! What do you know of this? Speak up, sir, speak up. Do you know of it? Where are they?" He had him by the arm, shaking him like a bag, and the boy's words, if he had any, were jolted forth in inarticulate murmurs. The doctor, with a revulsion from his own violence, set him down again. He observed Anastasie in tears. "Anastasie," he said in quite an altered voice, "compose yourself, command your feelings. I would not have you give way to passion like the vulgar. This—this trifling accident must be lived down. Jean-Marie, bring me my smaller medicine chest. A gentle laxative is indicated."

And he dosed the family all round, leading the way himself with a double quantity. The wretched Anastasie, who had never been ill in the whole course of her existence, and whose soul recoiled from remedies, wept floods of tears as she sipped, and shuddered, and protested, and then was bullied and

shouted at until she sipped again. As for Jean-Marie, he took his portion down with stoicism.

"I have given him a less amount," observed the doctor, "his youth protecting him against emotion. And now that we have thus parried any morbid consequences, let us reason."

"I am so cold!" wailed Anastasie.

"Cold!" cried the doctor. "I give thanks to God that I am made of fierier material. Why, madame, a blow like this would set a frog into a transpiration. If you're cold, you can retire; and, by the way, you might throw me down my trousers. It is chilly for the legs."

"Oh, no!" protested Anastasie. "I will stay with you."

"Nay, madame, you shall not suffer for your devotion," said the doctor. "I will myself fetch you a shawl." And he went upstairs and returned more fully clad and with an armful of wraps for the shivering Anastasie. "And now," he resumed, "to investigate this crime. Let us proceed by induction. Anastasie, do you know anything that can help us?" Anastasie knew nothing. "Or you, Jean-Marie?"

"Not I," replied the boy steadily.

"Good," returned the doctor. "We shall now turn our attention to the material evidences. I was born to be a detective; I have the eye and the systematic spirit. First, violence has been employed. The door was broken open; and it may be observed, in passing, that the lock was dear indeed at what I paid for it—a crow to pluck with Master Goguelat. Second, here is the instrument employed, one of our own table knives, one of our best, my dear, which seems to indicate no preparation on the part of the gang—if gang it was. Thirdly, I observe that nothing has been removed except the Franchard dishes and the casket; our own silver has been minutely respected. This is wily; it shows intelligence, a knowledge of the

code, a desire to avoid legal consequences. I argue from this fact that the gang numbers persons of respectability—outward, of course, and merely outward, as the robbery proves. But I argue, second, that we must have been observed at Franchard itself by some occult observer, and dogged throughout the day with a skill and patience that I venture to qualify as consummate. No ordinary man, no occasional criminal, would have shown himself capable of this combination. We have in our neighborhood, it is far from improbable, a retired bandit of the highest order of intelligence."

"Good heaven!" cried the horrified Anastasie. "Henri, how can you!"

"My cherished one, this is a process of induction," said the doctor. "If any of my steps are unsound, correct me. You are silent? Then do not, I beseech you, be so vulgarly illogical as to revolt from my conclusion. We have now arrived," he resumed, "at some idea of the composition of the gang—for I incline to the hypothesis of more than one—and we now leave this room, which can disclose no more, and turn our attention to the court and garden. Jean-Marie, I trust you are observantly following my various steps; this is an excellent piece of education for you. Come with me to the door. No steps on the court; it is unfortunate our court should be paved. On what small matters hangs the destiny of these delicate investigations! Hey! What have we here? I have led you to the very spot," he said, standing grandly backward and indicating the green gate. "An esplanade, as you can now see for yourselves, has taken place."

Sure enough, the green paint was in several places scratched and broken, and one of the panels preserved the print of a nailed shoe. The foot had slipped, however, and it was difficult to estimate the size of the shoe, and impossible to distinguish the pattern of the nails.

"The whole robbery," concluded the doctor, "step by step, has been reconstituted. Inductive science can no further go."

"It is wonderful," said his wife. "You should indeed have been a detective, Henri. I had no idea of your talents."

"My dear," replied Desprez condescendingly, "a man of scientific imagination combines the lesser faculties; he is a detective just as he is a publicist or a general; these are but local applications of his special talent. But now," he continued, "would you have me go further? Would you have me lay my finger on the culprits—or, rather, for I cannot promise quite so much, point out to you the very house where they consort? It may be a satisfaction, at least it is all we are likely to get, since we are denied the remedy of law. I reach the further stage in this way. In order to fill my outline of the robbery, I require a man of education, I require a man superior to considerations of morality. The three requisites all center in Tentailon's boarders. They are painters, therefore they are continually lounging in the forest. They are painters, therefore they are not unlikely to have some smattering of education. Lastly, because they are painters, they are probably immoral. And this I prove in two ways. First, painting is an art which merely addresses the eye; it does not in any particular exercise the moral sense. And, second, painting, in common with all the other arts, implies the dangerous quality of imagination. A man of imagination is never moral; he outsoars literal demarcations and reviews life under too many shifting lights to rest content with the invidious distinctions of the law!"

"But you always say—at least, so I understood you," said madame, "that these lads display no imagination whatever."

"My dear, they displayed imagina-

tion, and of a very fantastic order, too," returned the doctor, "when they embraced their beggarly profession. Besides—and this is an argument exactly suited to your intellectual level—many of them are English and American. Where else should we expect to find a thief? And now you had better get your coffee. Because we have lost a treasure, there is no reason for starving. For my part, I shall break my fast with white wine. I feel unaccountably heated and thirsty to-day. I can only attribute it to the shock of the discovery. And yet, you will bear me out, I supported the emotion nobly."

The doctor had now talked himself back into an admirable humor; and as he sat in the arbor and slowly imbibed a large allowance of white wine and picked a little bread and cheese with no very impetuous appetite, if a third of his meditations ran upon the missing treasure, the other two thirds were more pleasingly busied in the retrospect of his detective skill.

About eleven Casimir arrived; he had caught an early train to Fontainebleau, and driven over to save time; and now his cab was stabled at Tentaillon's, and he remarked, studying his watch, that he could spare an hour and a half. He was much the man of business, decisively spoken, given to frowning in an intellectual manner. Anastasie's born brother, he did not waste much sentiment on the lady, gave her an English family kiss, and demanded a meal.

"You can tell me your story while we eat," he observed. "Anything good to-day, Stasie?"

He was promised something good. The trio sat down to table in the arbor, Jean-Marie waiting as well as eating, and the doctor recounted what had happened in his richest narrative manner. Casimir heard it with explosions of laughter.

"What a streak of luck for you, my good brother," he observed, when the

tale was over. "If you had gone to Paris, you would have played dick-duck-drake with the whole consignment in three months. Your own would have followed, and you would have come to me in a procession like the last time. But I give you warning—Stasie may weep and Henri ratiocinate—it will not serve you twice. Your next collapse will be fatal. I thought I had told you so, Stasie? Hey? No sense?"

The doctor winced and looked furtively at Jean-Marie, but the boy seemed apathetic.

"And then again," broke out Casimir, "what children you are—vicious children, my faith! How could you tell the value of this trash? It might have been worth nothing, or next door."

"Pardon me," said the doctor. "You have your usual flow of spirits, I perceive, but even less than your usual deliberation. I am not entirely ignorant of these matters."

"Not entirely ignorant of anything ever I heard of," interrupted Casimir, bowing and raising his glass with a sort of pert politeness.

"At least," resumed the doctor, "I gave my mind to the subject—that you may be willing to believe—and I estimated that our capital would be doubled." And he described the nature of the find.

"My word of honor!" said Casimir. "I half believe you! But much would depend on the quality of the gold."

"The quality, my dear Casimir, was——" And the doctor, in default of language, kissed his finger tips.

"I would not take your word for it, my good friend," retorted the man of business. "You are a man of very rosy views. But this robbery," he continued, "this robbery is an odd thing. Of course, I pass over your nonsense about gangs and landscape painters. For me, that is a dream. Who was in the house last night?"

"None but ourselves," replied the doctor.

"And this young gentleman?" asked Casimir, jerking a nod in the direction of Jean-Marie.

"He, too." The doctor bowed.

"Well, and if it is a fair question, who is he?" pursued the brother-in-law.

"Jean-Marie," answered the doctor, "combines the functions of a son and stable boy. He began as the latter, but he rose rapidly to the more honorable rank in our affections. He is, I may say, the greatest comfort in our lives."

"Ha!" said Casimir. "And previous to becoming one of you?"

"Jean-Marie has lived a remarkable existence; his experience has been eminently formative," replied Desprez. "If I had to choose an education for my son, I should have chosen such another. Beginning life with mountebanks and thieves, passing onward to the society and friendship of philosophers, he may be said to have skimmed the volume of human life."

"Thieves?" repeated the brother-in-law with a meditative air.

The doctor could have bitten his tongue out. He foresaw what was coming, and prepared his mind for a vigorous defense.

"Did you ever steal yourself?" asked Casimir, turning suddenly on Jean-Marie and for the first time employing a single eyeglass which hung round his neck.

"Yes, sir," replied the boy, with a deep blush.

Casimir turned to the others with pursed lips, and nodded to them meaningly. "Hey?" said he. "How is that?"

"Jean-Marie is a teller of the truth," returned the doctor, throwing out his chest.

"He has never told a lie," added madame. "He is the best of boys."

"Never told a lie, has he not?" re-

flected Casimir. "Strange, very strange. Give me your attention, my young friend," he continued. "You knew about this treasure?"

"He helped to bring it home," interposed the doctor.

"Desprez, I ask you nothing but to hold your tongue," returned Casimir. "I mean to question this stable boy of yours; and if you are so certain of his innocence, you can afford to let him answer for himself. Now, sir," he resumed, pointing his eyeglass straight at Jean-Marie. "You knew it could be stolen with impunity? You knew you could not be prosecuted? Come! Did you, or did you not?"

"I did," answered Jean-Marie in a miserable whisper. He sat there changing color like a revolving pharos, twisting his fingers hysterically, swallowing air, the picture of guilt.

"You knew where it was put?" resumed the inquisitor.

"Yes," from Jean-Marie.

"You say you have been a thief before," continued Casimir. "Now how am I to know that you are not one still? I suppose you could climb the green gate?"

"Yes," still lower, from the culprit.

"Well, then, it was you who stole these things. You know it, and you dare not deny it. Look me in the face! Raise your sneak's eyes and answer!"

But in place of anything of that sort Jean-Marie broke into a dismal howl and fled from the arbor. Anastasie, as she pursued to capture and reassure the victim, found time to send one Parthian arrow. "Casimir, you are a brute!"

"My brother," said Desprez with the greatest dignity, "you take upon yourself a license—"

"Desprez," interrupted Casimir, "for Heaven's sake be a man of the world. You telegraph me to leave my business and come down here on yours. I come, I ask the business, you say:

'Find me this thief!' Well, I find him; I say: 'There he is!' You need not like it, but you have no manner of right to take offense."

"Well," returned the doctor, "I grant that; I will even thank you for your mistaken zeal. But your hypothesis was so extravagantly monstrous——"

"Look here," interrupted Casimir; "was it you or Stasie?"

"Certainly not," answered the doctor.

"Very well; then it was the boy. Say no more about it," said the brother-in-law, and he produced his cigar case.

"I will say this much more," returned Desprez: "if that boy came and told me so himself, I should not believe him; and if I did believe him, so implicit is my trust, I should conclude that he had acted for the best."

"Well, well!" said Casimir indulgently. "Have you a light? I must be going. And, by the way, I wish you would let me sell your Turks for you. I always told you it meant smash. I tell you so again. Indeed, it was partly that which brought me down. You never acknowledged my letters—a most unpardonable habit."

"My good brother," replied the doctor blandly, "I have never denied your ability in business; but I can perceive your limitations."

"Egad, my friend, I can return the compliment," observed the man of business. "Your limitation is to be downright irrational."

"Observe the relative position," returned the doctor, with a smile. "It is your attitude to believe through thick and thin in one man's judgment—your own. I follow the same opinion, but critically and with open eyes. Which is the more irrational? I leave it to yourself."

"Oh, my dear fellow!" cried Casimir. "Stick to your Turks, stick to your stable boy, go to the devil in general in your own way and be done with it. But don't ratiocinate with me—I cannot

bear it. And so, ta-ta. I might as well have stayed away for any good I've done. Say good-by from me to Stasie and to the sullen hangdog of a stable boy, if you insist on it; I'm off."

And Casimir departed. The doctor, that night, dissected his character before Anastasie.

"One thing, my beautiful," he said, "he has learned one thing from his lifelong acquaintance with your husband: the word *ratiocinate*. It shines in his vocabulary, like a jewel in a muck heap. And, even so, he continually misapplies it. For you must have observed he uses it as a sort of taunt, in the case of *to ergotise*, implying, as it were—the poor, dear fellow!—a vein of sophistry. As for his cruelty to Jean-Marie, it must be forgiven him—it is not his nature; it is the nature of his life. A man who deals with money, my dear, is a man lost."

With Jean-Marie the process of reconciliation had been somewhat slow. At first he was inconsolable, insisted on leaving the family, went from paroxysm to paroxysm of tears; and it was only after Anastasie had been closeted for an hour with him, alone, that she came forth, sought out the doctor, and, with tears in her eyes, acquainted that gentleman with what had passed.

"At first, my husband, he would hear of nothing," she said. "Imagine! If he had left us! What would the treasure be to that? Horrible treasure, it has brought all this about! At last, after he has sobbed his very heart out, he agrees to stay on a condition—we are not to mention this matter, this infamous suspicion, not even to mention the robbery. On that agreement only, the poor, cruel boy will consent to remain among his friends."

"But this inhibition," said the doctor, "this embargo—it cannot possibly apply to me?"

"To all of us," Anastasie assured him.

"My cherished one," Desprez protested, "you must have misunderstood. It cannot apply to me. He would naturally come to me."

"Henri," she said, "it does; I swear to you it does."

"This is a painful, a very painful circumstance," the doctor said, looking a little black. "I cannot affect, Anastasie, to be anything but justly wounded. I feel this; I feel it, my wife, acutely."

"I knew you would," she said. "But if you had seen his distress! We must make allowances; we must sacrifice our feelings."

"I trust, my dear, you have never found me averse to sacrifices," returned the doctor very stiffly.

"And you will let me go and tell him that you have agreed? It will be like your noble nature," she cried.

So it would, he perceived—it would be like his noble nature! Up jumped his spirits, triumphant at the thought.

"Go, darling," he said nobly, "reassure him. The subject is buried; more—I make an effort, I have accustomed my will to these exertions—and it is forgotten."

A little after, but still with swollen eyes and looking mortally sheepish, Jean-Marie reappeared and went ostentatiously about his business. He was the only unhappy member of the party that sat down that night to supper. As for the doctor, he was radiant. He thus sang the requiem of the treasure:

"This has been, on the whole, a most amusing episode," he said. "We are not a penny the worse—nay, we are immensely gainers. Our philosophy has been exercised; some of the turtle is still left—the most wholesome of delicacies; I have my staff, Anastasie has her new dress, Jean-Marie is the proud possessor of a fashionable képi. Besides, we had a glass of Hermitage last night; the glow still suffuses my memory. I was growing positively niggardly with that Hermitage, positively

niggardly. Let me take the hint: we had one bottle to celebrate the appearance of our visionary fortune; let us have a second to console us for its occultation. The third I hereby dedicate to Jean-Marie's wedding breakfast."

CHAPTER VII.

THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF DESPREZ.

The doctor's house has not yet received the compliment of a description, and it is now high time that the omission were supplied, for the house is itself an actor in the stories, and one whose part is nearly at an end. Two stories in height, walls of a warm yellow, tiles of an ancient, ruddy brown diversified with moss and lichen, it stood with one wall to the street in the angle of the doctor's property. It was roomy, drafty, and inconvenient. The large rafters were here and there engraved with rude marks and patterns; the handrail of the stair was carved in countrified arabesque; a stout timber pillar, which did duty to support the dining-room roof, bore mysterious characters on its darker side—runes, according to the doctor—nor did he fail, when he ran over the legendary history of the house and its possessors, to dwell upon the Scandinavian scholar who had left them. Floors, doors, and rafters made a great variety of angles; every room had a particular inclination; the gable had tilted toward the garden, after the manner of a leaning tower, and one of the former proprietors had buttressed the building from that side with a great strut of wood, like the derrick of a crane. Altogether, it had many marks of ruin; it was a house for the rats to desert; and nothing but its excellent brightness—the window glass polished and shining, the paint well scoured, the brasses radiant, the very prop all wreathed about with climbing flowers—nothing but its air of a well-tenanted

smiling veteran, sitting, crutch and all, in the sunny corner of a garden, marked it as a house for comfortable people to inhabit. In poor or idle management it would soon have hurried into the blackguard stages of decay. As it was, the whole family loved it, and the doctor was never better inspired than when he narrated its imaginary story and drew the character of its successive masters, from the Hebrew merchant who had reëdified its walls after the sack of the town, and past the mysterious engraver of the runes, down to the long-headed boor from whom he had himself acquired it at a ruinous expense. As for any alarm about its security, the idea had never presented itself. What had stood four centuries might well endure a little longer.

Indeed, in this particular winter, after the finding and losing of the treasure, the Desprez had an anxiety of a very different order, and one which lay nearer their hearts. Jean-Marie was plainly not himself. He had fits of hectic activity, when he made unusual exertions to please, spoke more and faster, and redoubled in attention to his lessons. But these were interrupted by spells of melancholia and brooding silence, when the boy was little better than unbearable.

"Silence," the doctor moralized, "you see, Anastasie, what comes of silence. Had the boy properly unbosomed himself, the little disappointment about the treasure, the little annoyance about Casimir's incivility, would long ago have been forgotten. As it is, they prey upon him like a disease. He loses flesh, his appetite is variable, and, on the whole, impaired. I keep him on the strictest regimen, I exhibit the most powerful tonics, both in vain."

"Don't you think you drug him too much?" asked madame, with an irrepressible shudder.

"Drug?" cried the doctor. "I drug? Anastasie, you are mad!"

Time went on, and the boy's health still slowly declined. The doctor blamed the weather, which was cold and boisterous. He called in his confrère from Bourron, took a fancy for him, magnified his capacity, and was pretty soon under treatment himself—it scarcely appeared for what complaint. He and Jean-Marie had each medicine to take at different periods of the day. The doctor used to lie in wait for the exact moment, watch in hand. "There is nothing like regularity," he would say, fill out the doses, and dilate on the virtues of the draft; and if the boy seemed none the better, the doctor was not at all the worse.

Gunpowder Day, the boy was particularly low. It was scowling, squally weather. Huge, broken companies of cloud sailed swiftly overhead; raking gleams of sunlight swept the village, and were followed by intervals of darkness and white, flying rain. At times the wind lifted up its voice and belled. The trees were all scourging themselves along the meadows, the last leaves flying like dust.

The doctor, between the boy and the weather, was in his element; he had a theory to prove. He sat with his watch out and a barometer in front of him, waiting for the squalls and noting their effect upon the human pulse. "For the true philosopher," he remarked delightfully, "every fact in nature is a toy." A letter came to him; but, as its arrival coincided with the approach of another gust, he merely crammed it into his pocket, gave the time to Jean-Marie, and the next moment they were both counting their pulses as if for a wager.

At nightfall the wind rose into a tempest. It besieged the hamlet, apparently from every side, as if with batteries of cannon; the houses shook and groaned; live coals were blown upon the floor. The uproar and terror of the night kept people long awake, sitting with pallid faces giving ear.

It was twelve before the Desprez family retired. By half past one, when the storm was already somewhat past its height, the doctor was awakened from a troubled slumber and sat up. A noise still rang in his ears, but whether of this world or the world of dreams he was not certain. Another clap of wind followed. It was accompanied by a sickening movement of the whole house, and in the subsequent lull Desprez could hear the tiles pouring like a cataract into the loft above his head. He plucked Anastasie bodily out of bed.

"Run!" he cried, thrusting some wearing apparel into her hands. "The house is falling. To the garden!"

She did not pause to be twice bidden; she was down the stair in an instant. She had never before suspected herself of such activity. The doctor, meanwhile, with the speed of a piece of pantomime business, and undeterred by broken shins, proceeded to rout out Jean-Marie, tore Aline from her virgin slumbers, seized her by the hand, and tumbled downstairs and into the garden, with the girl stumbling behind him, still not half awake.

The fugitives rendezvoused in the arbor by some common instinct. Then came a bull's-eye flash of struggling moonshine, which disclosed their four figures standing huddled from the wind in a raffle of flying drapery, and not without a considerable need for more. At the humiliating spectacle Anastasie clutched her nightdress desperately about her and burst loudly into tears. The doctor flew to console her, but she elbowed him away. She suspected everybody of being the general public, and thought the darkness was alive with eyes.

Another gleam and another violent gust arrived together; the house was seen to rock on its foundation, and, just as the light was once more eclipsed, a crash which triumphed over the shout-

ing of the wind announced its fall, and for a moment the whole garden was alive with skipping tiles and brickbats. One such missile grazed the doctor's ear; another descended on the bare foot of Aline, who instantly made night hideous with her shrieks.

By this time the hamlet was alarmed, lights flashed from the windows, hails reached the party, and the doctor answered, nobly contending against Aline and the tempest. But this prospect of help only awakened Anastasie to a more active stage of terror.

"Henri, people will be coming!" she screamed in her husband's ear.

"I trust so," he replied.

"They cannot. I would rather die," she wailed.

"My dear," said the doctor reprovingly, "you are excited. I gave you some clothes. What have you done with them?"

"Oh, I don't know—I must have thrown them away! Where are they?" she sobbed.

Desprez groped about in the darkness.

"Admirable!" he remarked. "My gray-velveteen trousers! This will exactly meet your necessities!"

"Give them to me!" she cried fiercely; but as soon as she had them in her hands her mood appeared to alter—she stood silent for a moment, and then pressed the garment back upon the doctor. "Give it to Aline," she said, "poor girl!"

"Nonsense!" said the doctor. "Aline does not know what she is about. Aline is beside herself with terror; and, at any rate, she is a peasant. Now, I am really concerned at this exposure for a person of your housekeeping habits; my solicitude and your fantastic modesty both point to the same remedy—the pantaloons." He held them ready.

"It is impossible. You do not understand," she said with dignity.

By this time rescue was at hand. It

had been found impracticable to enter by the street, for the gate was blocked with masonry, and the nodding ruin still threatened further avalanches. But between the doctor's garden and the one on the right hand there was that very picturesque contrivance—a common well; the door on the Desprez side had chanced to be unbolted, and now, through the arched aperture, a man's bearded face and an arm supporting a lantern were introduced into the world of windy darkness, where Anastasie concealed her woes. The light struck here and there among the tossing apple boughs, it glinted on the grass; but the lantern and the glowing face became the center of the world. Anastasie crouched back from the intrusion.

"This way!" shouted the man. "Are you all safe?"

Aline, still screaming, ran to the newcomer, and was presently hauled headforemost through the wall.

"Now, Anastasie, come on; it is your turn," said the husband.

"I cannot," she replied.

"Are we all to die of exposure, madame?" thundered Doctor Desprez.

"You can go!" she cried. "Oh, go, go away! I can stay here; I am quite warm."

The doctor took her by the shoulders with an oath.

"Stop!" she screamed. "I will put them on."

She took the detested lendings in her hand once more; but her repulsion was stronger than shame. "Never!" she cried, shuddering, and flung them far away into the night.

Next moment the doctor had whirled her to the well. The man was there and the lantern; Anastasie closed her eyes and appeared to herself to be about to die. How she was transported through the arch she knew not; but once on the other side she was received by the neighbor's wife, and enveloped in a friendly blanket.

Beds were made ready for the two women, clothes of very various sizes for the doctor and Jean-Marie; and for the remainder of the night, while madame dozed in and out on the borderland of hysterics, her husband sat beside the fire and held forth to the admiring neighbors. He showed them, at length, the causes of the accident; for years, he explained, the fall had been impending; one sign had followed another, the joints had opened, the plaster had cracked, the old walls bowed inward; last, not three weeks ago, the cellar door had begun to work with difficulty in its grooves. "The cellar!" he said, gravely shaking his head over a glass of mulled wine. "That reminds me of my poor vintages. By a manifest providence the Hermitage was nearly at an end. One bottle—I lost but one bottle of that incomparable wine. It had been set apart against Jean-Marie's wedding. Well, I must lay down some more; it will be an interest in life. I am, however, a man somewhat advanced in years. My great work is now buried in the fall of my humble roof; it will never be completed—my name will have been writ in water. And yet you find me calm—I would say cheerful. Can your priest do more?"

By the first glimpse of day the party sallied forth from the fireside into the street. The wind had fallen, but still charioted a world of troubled clouds; the air bit like frost, and the party, as they stood about the ruins in the rainy twilight of the morning, beat upon their breasts and blew into their hands for warmth. The house had entirely fallen, the walls outward, the roof in; it was a mere heap of rubbish, with here and there a forlorn spear of broken rafter. A sentinel was placed over the ruins to protect the property, and the party adjourned to Tentaillon's to break their fast at the doctor's expense. The bottle circulated somewhat freely; and be-

fore they left the table it had begun to snow.

For three days the snow continued to fall, and the ruins, covered with tarpaulin and watched by sentries, were left undisturbed. The Desprez meanwhile had taken up their abode at Tentaillon's. Madame spent her time in the kitchen, concocting little delicacies, with the admiring aid of Madame Tentaillon, or sitting by the fire in thoughtful abstraction. The fall of the house affected her wonderfully little; that blow had been parried by another; and in her mind she was continually fighting over again the battle of the trousers. Had she done right? Had she done wrong? And now she would applaud her determination; and anon, with a horrid flush of unavailing penitence, she would regret the trousers. No juncture in her life had so much exercised her judgment. In the meantime the doctor had become vastly pleased with his situation. Two of the summer boarders still lingered behind the rest, prisoners for lack of a remittance; they were both English, but one of them spoke French pretty fluently, and was, besides, a humorous, agile-minded fellow, with whom the doctor could reason by the hour, secure of comprehension. Many were the glasses they emptied, many the topics they discussed.

"Anastasie," the doctor said on the third morning, "take an example from your husband, from Jean-Marie. The excitement has done more for the boy than all my tonics; he takes his turn as sentry with positive gusto. As for me, you behold me. I have made friends with the Egyptians; and my Pharaoh is, I swear it, a most agreeable companion. You alone are hipped. About a house—a few dresses? What are they in comparison to the 'Pharmacopœia'—the labor of years lying buried below stones and sticks in this depressing hamlet? The snow falls; I shake it from my cloak! Imitate me. Our income

will be impaired, I grant it, since we must rebuild; but moderation, patience, and philosophy will gather about the hearth. In the meanwhile, the Tentaillons are obliging; the table, with your additions, will pass; only the wine is execrable—well, I shall send for some to-day. My Pharaoh will be gratified to drink a decent glass; aha! and I shall see if he possesses that acme of organization—a palate. If he has a palate, he is perfect."

"Henri," she said, shaking her head, "you are a man; you cannot understand my feelings; no woman could shake off the memory of so public a humiliation."

The doctor could not restrain a titter.

"Pardon me, darling," he said; "but really, to the philosophical intelligence the incident appears so small a trifle. You looked extremely well——"

"Henri!" she cried.

"Well, well, I will say no more," he replied. "Though, to be sure, if you had consented to indue—*A propos*," he broke off, "and my trousers! They are lying in the snow—my favorite trousers!" And he dashed in quest of Jean-Marie.

Two hours afterward the boy returned to the inn with a spade under one arm and a curious sop of clothing under the other.

The doctor ruefully took it in his hands.

"They have been!" he said. "Their tense is past. Excellent pantaloons, you are no more! Stay! Something in the pocket!" And he produced a piece of paper. "A letter! Aye, now I mind me; it was received on the morning of the gale, when I was absorbed in delicate investigations. It is still legible. From poor, dear Casimir! It is as well," he chuckled, "that I have educated him to patience. Poor Casimir and his correspondence—his infinitesimal, timorous, idiotic correspondence!"

He had by this time cautiously un-

folded the wet letter; but, as he bent himself to decipher the writing, a cloud descended on his brow.

"*Bigre!*" he cried, with a galvanic start.

And then the letter was whipped into the fire, and the doctor's cap was on his head in the turn of a hand.

"Ten minutes! I can catch it, if I run," he cried. "It is always late. I go to Paris. I shall telegraph."

"Henri! What is wrong?" cried his wife.

"Ottoman bonds!" came from the disappearing doctor; and Anastasie and Jean-Marie were left face to face with the wet trousers. Desprez had gone to Paris, for the second time in seven years; he had gone to Paris with a pair of wooden shoes, a knitted spencer, a black blouse, a country nightcap, and twenty francs in his pocket. The fall of the house was but a secondary marvel; the whole world might have fallen and scarce left his family more petrified.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WAGES OF PHILOSOPHY.

On the morning of the next day, the doctor, a mere specter of himself, was brought back in the custody of Casimir. They found Anastasie and the boy sitting together by the fire; and Desprez, who had exchanged his toilet for a ready-made rig-out of poor materials, waved his hand as he entered and sank speechless on the nearest chair. Madame turned direct to Casimir.

"What is wrong?" she cried.

"Well," replied Casimir, "what have I told you all along? It has come. It is a clean shave, this time; so you may as well bear up and make the best of it. House down, too, eh? Bad luck, upon my soul."

"Are we—are we—ruined?" she gasped.

The doctor stretched out his arms to her.

"Ruined!" he replied. "You are ruined by your sinister husband."

Casimir observed the consequent embrace through his eyeglass; then he turned to Jean-Marie.

"You hear?" he said. "They are ruined; no more pickings, no more house, no more fat cutlets. It strikes me, my friend, that you had best be packing; the present speculation is about worked out." And he nodded to him meaningly.

"Never!" cried Desprez, springing up. "Jean-Marie, if you prefer to leave me, now that I am poor, you can go; you shall receive your hundred francs, if so much remains to me. But if you will consent to stay"—the doctor wept a little—"Casimir offers me a place—as clerk," he resumed. "The emoluments are slender, but they will be enough for three. It is too much already to have lost my fortune; must I lose my son?"

Jean-Marie sobbed bitterly, but without a word.

"I don't like boys who cry," observed Casimir. "This one is always crying. Here! You clear out of this for a little; I have business with your master and mistress, and these domestic feelings may be settled after I am gone. March!" And he held the door open.

Jean-Marie slunk out, like a detected thief.

By twelve they were all at table but Jean-Marie.

"Hey?" said Casimir. "Gone, you see. Took the hint at once."

"I do not, I confess," said Desprez, "I do not seek to excuse his absence. It speaks a want of heart that disappoints me sorely."

"Want of manners," corrected Casimir. "Heart he never had. Why, Desprez, for a clever fellow, you are the most gullible mortal in creation. Your ignorance of human nature and human business is beyond belief. You are

swindled by heathen Turks, swindled by vagabond children, swindled right and left, upstairs and downstairs. I think it must be your imagination. I thank my stars I have none."

"Pardon me," replied Desprez, still humbly, but with a return of spirit at sight of a distinction to be drawn; "pardon me, Casimir. You possess, even to an eminent degree, the commercial imagination. It was the lack of that in me—it appears it is my weak point—that has led to these repeated shocks. By the commercial imagination the financier forecasts the destiny of his investments, marks the falling house——"

"Egad!" interrupted Casimir. "Our friend the stable boy appears to have his share of it."

The doctor was silenced; and the meal was continued and finished principally to the tune of the brother-in-law's not very consolatory conversation. He entirely ignored the two young English painters, turning a blind eyeglass to their salutations, and continuing his remarks as if he were alone in the bosom of his family, and with every second word he ripped another stitch out of the air balloon of Desprez's vanity. By the time coffee was over the poor doctor was as limp as a napkin.

"Let us go and see the ruins," said Casimir.

They strolled forth into the street. The fall of the house, like the loss of a front tooth, had quite transformed the village. Through the gap the eye commanded a great stretch of open, snowy country, and the place shrank in comparison. It was like a room with an open door. The sentinel stood by the green gate, looking very red and cold, but he had a pleasant word for the doctor and his wealthy kinsman.

Casimir looked at the mound of ruins, he tried the quality of the tarpaulin.

"H'm!" he said. "I hope the cellar arch has stood. If it has, my good brother, I will give you a good price for the wines."

"We shall start digging to-morrow," said the sentry. "There is no more fear of snow."

"My friend," returned Casimir sententially, "you had better wait till you get paid."

The doctor winced and began dragging his offensive brother-in-law toward Tentaillon's. In the house there would be fewer auditors, and these already in the secret of his fall.

"Hullo!" cried Casimir. "There goes the stable boy with his luggage; no, egad! he is taking it into the inn."

And, sure enough, Jean-Marie was seen to cross the snowy street and enter Tentaillon's, staggering under a large hamper.

The doctor stopped with a sudden, wild hope.

"What can he have?" he said. "Let us go and see." And he hurried on.

"His luggage, to be sure," answered Casimir. "He is on the move—thanks to the commercial imagination."

"I have not seen that hamper for—ever so long," remarked the doctor.

"Nor will you see it much longer," chuckled Casimir; "unless, indeed, we interfere. And, by the way, I insist on an examination."

"You will not require," said Desprez positively, with a sob; and, casting a moist, triumphant glance at Casimir, he began to run.

"What the devil is up with him, I wonder?" Casimir reflected; and then, curiosity taking the upper hand, he followed the doctor's example and took to his heels.

The hamper was so heavy and large, and Jean-Marie himself so little and so weary, that it had taken him a great while to bundle it upstairs to the Desprez private room; and he had just set

it down on the floor in front of Anastasie when the doctor arrived, and was closely followed by the man of business. Boy and hamper were both in a most sorry plight; for the one had passed four months underground in a certain cave on the way to Achères, and the other had run about five miles, as hard as his legs would carry him, half that distance under a staggering weight.

"Jean-Marie," cried the doctor in a voice that was only too seraphic to be called hysterical, "is it— It is!" he cried. "Oh, my son, my son!" And

he sat down upon the hamper and sobbed like a little child.

"You will not go to Paris now," said Jean-Marie sheepishly.

"Casimir," said Desprez, raising his wet face, "do you see that boy, that angel boy? He is the thief; he took the treasure from a man unfit to be intrusted with its use; he brings it back to me when I am sobered and humbled. These, Casimir, are the fruits of my teaching, and this moment is the reward of my life."

"Tiens!" said Casimir.



WOMAN learns how to hate in proportion as she forgets how to charm.—
Friedrich Nietzsche.



"WHAT are we," said Mr. Pecksniff, "but coaches? Some of us are slow coaches, some of us are fast coaches. Our passions are the horses; and rampant animals, too! And virtue is the drag."—*Charles Dickens.*



THE genius of Dante, Beatrice awoke; of his art she was the inspiration. For that he she, as he called her, blessed—thrice blessed since she did not love him. Had she loved him, he could not have done better—that is not possible—and he might perhaps have omitted to do as well.—*Edgar Saltus.*



You have just laid it down as a position that a thousand a year is an indispensable ingredient in the passion of love, and that no man, who is not so far gifted by nature, can reasonably presume to feel that passion himself, or be correctly the object of it with a well-educated female.—*Thomas Love Peacock.*



THOUGH it may be doubtful whether a man can truly love two women at the same time, it is beyond doubt that he can love several in succession with all the depth of his heart; and the assertion that there is only one true love is an unwarranted generalization to all mankind of a maxim which is true of woman alone. . . . Woman can learn but once by experience what love is, and it is painful for the lover not to be the one who first teaches her.—*Eduard von Hartmann.*

by
Oscar Wilde



The
YOUNG KING

IT was the night before the day fixed for his coronation, and the young king was sitting alone in his beautiful chamber. His courtiers had all taken their leave of him, bowing their heads to the ground, according to the ceremonious usage of the day, and had retired to the great hall of the palace, to receive a few last lessons from the professor of etiquette; there being some of them who had still quite natural manners, which in a courtier is, I need hardly say, a very grave offense.

The lad—for he was only a lad, being but sixteen years of age—was not sorry at their departure, and had flung himself back with a deep sigh of relief on the soft cushions of his embroidered couch, lying there, wild-eyed and open-mouthed, like a brown woodland faun, or some young animal of the forest newly snared by the hunters.

And, indeed, it was the hunters who had found him, coming upon him almost by chance as, bare-limbed and pipe in

hand, he was following the flock of the poor goatherd who had brought him up, and whose son he had always fancied himself to be. The child of the old king's only daughter by a secret marriage with one much beneath her in station—a stranger, some said, who, by the wonderful magic of his lute playing, had made the young princess love him; while others spoke of an artist from Rimini, to whom the princess had shown much, perhaps too much honor, and who had suddenly disappeared from the city, leaving his work in the cathedral unfinished—he had been, when but a week old, stolen away from his mother's side, as she slept, and given into the charge of a common peasant and his wife, who were without children of their own, and lived in a remote part of the forest, more than a day's ride from the town. Grief, or the plague, as the court physician stated, or, as some suggested, a swift Italian poison administered in a cup of spiced wine, slew,

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within an hour of her wakening, the white girl who had given him birth, and as the trusty messenger who bare the child across his saddle bow stooped from his weary horse and knocked at the rude door of the goatherd's hut, the body of the princess was being lowered into an open grave that had been dug in a deserted churchyard, beyond the city gates—a grave where, it was said, another body was also lying—that of a young man of marvelous and foreign beauty, whose hands were tied behind him with a knotted cord, and whose breast was stabbed with many red wounds.

Such, at least, was the story that men whispered to each other. Certain it was that the old king, when on his death-bed, whether moved by remorse for his great sin, or merely desiring that the kingdom should not pass away from his line, had had the lad sent for, and, in the presence of the council, had acknowledged him as his heir.

And it seems that from the very first moment of his recognition he had shown signs of that strange passion for beauty that was destined to have so great an influence over his life. Those who accompanied him to the suite of rooms set apart for his service, often spoke of the cry of pleasure that broke from his lips when he saw the delicate raiment and rich jewels that had been prepared for him, and of the almost fierce joy with which he flung aside his rough leathern tunic and coarse sheepskin cloak. He missed, indeed, at times the fine freedom of his forest life, and was always apt to chafe at the tedious court ceremonies that occupied so much of each day, but the wonderful palace—*Joyeuse*, as they called it—of which he now found himself lord, seemed to him to be a new world fresh-fashioned for his delight; and as soon as he could escape from the council board or audience chamber, he would run down the great staircase, with its lions of gilt bronze

and its steps of bright porphyry, and wander from room to room, and from corridor to corridor, like one who was seeking to find in beauty an anodyne from pain, a sort of restoration from sickness.

Upon these journeys of discovery, as he would call them—and, indeed, they were to him real voyages through a marvelous land—he would sometimes be accompanied by the slim, fair-haired court pages, with their floating mantles, and gay, fluttering ribands; but more often he would be alone, feeling through a certain quick instinct, which was almost a divination, that the secrets of art are best learned in secret, and that Beauty, like Wisdom, loves the lonely worshiper.

Many curious stories were related about him at this period. It was said that a stout burgomaster, who had come to deliver a florid oratorical address on behalf of the citizens of the town, had caught sight of him kneeling in real adoration before a great picture that had just been brought from Venice, and that seemed to herald the worship of some new gods. On another occasion he had been missed for several hours, and after a lengthened search had been discovered in a little chamber in one of the northern turrets of the palace gazing, as one in a trance, at a Greek gem carved with the figure of Adonis. He had been seen, so the tale ran, pressing his warm lips to the marble brow of an antique statue that had been discovered in the bed of the river on the occasion of the building of the stone bridge, and was inscribed with the name of the Bithynian slave of Hadrian. He had passed a whole night in noting the effect of the moonlight on a silver image of Endymion.

All rare and costly materials had certainly a great fascination for him, and in his eagerness to procure them he had sent away many merchants, some to traffic for amber with the rough fisher folk of the north seas, some to Egypt

to look for that curious green turquoise which is found only in the tombs of kings, and is said to possess magical properties, some to Persia for silken carpets and painted pottery, and others to India to buy gauze and stained ivory, moonstones and bracelets of jade, sandalwood and blue enamel and shawls of fine wool.

But what had occupied him most was the robe he was to wear at his coronation—the robe of tissue gold, and the ruby-studded crown, and the scepter with its rows and rings of pearls. Indeed, it was of this that he was thinking to-night, as he lay back on his luxurious couch, watching the great pine-wood log that was burning itself out on the open hearth. The designs, which were from the hands of the most famous artists of the time, had been submitted to him many months before, and he had given orders that the artificers were to toil night and day to carry them out, and that the whole world was to be searched for jewels that would be worthy of their work. He saw himself in fancy standing at the high altar of the cathedral in the fair raiment of a king, and a smile played and lingered about his boyish lips, and lit up with a bright luster his dark, woodland eyes.

After some time he rose from his seat, and leaning against the carved penthouse of the chimney, looked around at the dimly lit room. The walls were hung with rich tapestries representing the Triumph of Beauty. A large press, inlaid with agate and lapis-lazuli, filled one corner, and facing the window stood a curiously wrought cabinet with lacquer panels of powdered and mosaicked gold, on which were placed some delicate goblets of Venetian glass, and a cup of dark-veined onyx. Pale poppies were embroidered on the silk coverlet of the bed, as though they had fallen from the tired hands of sleep, and tall reeds of fluted ivory bare up the velvet canopy, from which great tufts of ostrich plumes

sprang, like white foam, to the pallid silver of the fretted ceiling. A laughing Narcissus in green bronze held a polished mirror above its head. On the table stood a flat bowl of amethyst.

Outside he could see the huge dome of the cathedral, looming like a bubble over the shadowy houses, and the weary sentinels pacing up and down on the misty terrace by the river. Far away, in an orchard, a nightingale was singing. A faint perfume of jasmine came through the open window. He brushed his brown curls back from his forehead, and, taking up a lute, let his fingers stray across the cords. His heavy eyelids drooped, and a strange languor came over him. Never before had he felt so keenly, or with such exquisite joy, the magic and the mystery of beautiful things.

When midnight sounded from the clock tower he touched a bell, and his pages entered and disrobed him with much ceremony, pouring rose water over his hands, and strewing flowers on his pillow. A few moments after they had left the room, he fell asleep.

And as he slept he dreamed a dream, and this was his dream.

He thought that he was standing in a long, low attic, amidst the whir and clatter of many looms. The meager daylight peered in through the grated windows, and showed him the gaunt figures of the weavers bending over their cases. Pale, sickly-looking children were crouched on the huge crossbeams. As the shuttles dashed through the warp they lifted up the heavy battens, and when the shuttles stopped they let the battens fall and pressed the threads together. Their faces were pinched with famine, and their thin hands shook and trembled. Some haggard women were seated at a table sewing. A horrible odor filled the place. The air was foul and heavy, and the walls dripped and streamed with damp.

The young king went over to one of the weavers, and stood by him and watched him.

And the weaver looked at him angrily, and said: "Why art thou watching me? Art thou a spy set on us by our master?"

"Who is thy master?" asked the young king.

"Our master!" cried the weaver bitterly. "He is a man like myself. Indeed, there is but this difference between us—that he wears fine clothes while I go in rags, and that while I am weak from hunger he suffers not a little from overfeeding."

"The land is free," said the young king, "and thou art no man's slave."

"In war," answered the weaver, "the strong make slaves of the weak, and in peace the rich make slaves of the poor. We must work to live, and they give us such mean wages that we die. We toil for them all day long, and they heap up gold in their coffers, and our children fade away before their time, and the faces of those we love become hard and evil. We tread out the grapes, and another drinks the wine. We sow the corn, and our own board is empty. We have chains, though no eye beholds them; and are slaves, though men call us free."

"Is it so with all?" he asked.

"It is so with all," answered the weaver, "with the young as well as with the old, and the women as well as with the men, with the little children as well as with those who are stricken in years. The merchants grind us down, and we must needs do their bidding. The priest rides by and tells his beads, and no man has care of us. Through our sunless lanes creeps Poverty with her hungry eyes, and Sin with his sodden face follows close behind her. Misery wakes us in the morning, and Shame sits with us at night. But what are these things to thee? Thou art not one of us. Thy face is too happy." And he turned away scowling, and threw the shuttle

across the loom, and the young king saw that it was threaded with a thread of gold.

And a great terror seized upon him, and he said to the weaver: "What robe is this that thou art weaving?"

"It is the robe for the coronation of the young king," he answered. "What is that to thee?"

And the young king gave a loud cry and woke, and lo! he was in his own chamber, and through the window he saw the great honey-colored moon hanging in the dusky air.

And he fell asleep again and dreamed, and this was his dream:

He thought that he was lying on the deck of a huge galley that was being rowed by a hundred slaves. On a carpet by his side the master of the galley was seated. He was black as ebony, and his turban was of crimson silk. Great earrings of silver dragged down the thick lobes of his ears, and in his hands he had a pair of ivory scales.

The slaves were naked, but for a ragged loin cloth, and each man was chained to his neighbor. The hot sun beat brightly upon them, and the negroes ran up and down the gangway and lashed them with whips of hide. They stretched out their lean arms and pulled the heavy oars through the water. The salt spray flew from the blades.

At last they reached a little bay, and began to take soundings. A light wind blew from the shore, and covered the deck and the great lateen sail with a fine red dust. Three Arabs mounted on wild asses rode out and threw spears at them. The master of the galley took a painted bow in his hand and shot one of them in the throat. He fell heavily into the surf, and his companions galloped away. A woman wrapped in a yellow veil followed slowly on a camel, looking back now and then at the dead body.

As soon as they had cast anchor and hauled down the sail, the negroes went

into the hold and brought up a long rope ladder, heavily weighted with lead. The master of the galley threw it over the side, making the ends fast to two iron stanchions. Then the negroes seized the youngest of the slaves, and knocked his gyves off, and filled his nostrils and his ears with wax, and tied a big stone round his waist. He crept wearily down the ladder, and disappeared into the sea. A few bubbles rose where he sank. Some of the other slaves peered curiously over the side. At the prow of the galley sat a shark charmer, beating monotonously upon a drum.

After some time the diver rose up out of the water, and clung panting to the ladder with a pearl in his right hand. The negroes seized it from him, and thrust him back. The slaves fell asleep over their oars.

Again and again he came up, and each time that he did so he brought with him a beautiful pearl. The master of the galley weighed them, and put them into a little bag of green leather.

The young king tried to speak, but his tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of his mouth, and his lips refused to move. The negroes chattered to each other, and began to quarrel over a string of bright beads. Two cranes flew round and round the vessel.

Then the diver came up for the last time, and the pearl that he brought with him was fairer than all the pearls of Ormuz, for it was shaped like the full moon, and whiter than the morning star. But his face was strangely pale, and as he fell upon the deck the blood gushed from his ears and nostrils. He quivered for a little, and then he was still. The negroes shrugged their shoulders and threw the body overboard.

And the master of the galley laughed, and, reaching out, he took the pearl, and when he saw it he pressed it to his forehead and bowed. "It shall be," he said, "for the scepter of the young king," and

he made a sign to the negroes to draw up the anchor.

And when the young king heard this he gave a great cry, and woke, and through the window he saw the long, gray fingers of the dawn clutching at the fading stars.

And he fell asleep again, and dreamed, and this was his dream:

He thought that he was wandering through a dim wood, hung with strange fruits and with beautiful, poisonous flowers. The adders hissed at him as he went by, and the bright parrots flew screaming from branch to branch. Huge tortoises lay asleep upon the hot mud. The trees were full of apes and peacocks.

On and on he went, till he reached the outskirts of the wood, and there he saw an immense multitude of men toiling in the bed of a dried-up river. They swarmed up the crag like ants. They dug deep pits in the ground and went down into them. Some of them cleft the rocks with great axes; others grabbed in the sand. They tore up the cactus by its roots, and trampled on the scarlet blossoms. They hurried about, calling to each other, and no man was idle.

From the darkness of a cavern Death and Avarice watched them, and Death said: "I am weary; give me a third of them and let me go."

But Avarice shook her head. "They are my servants," she answered.

And Death said to her: "What hast thou in thy hand?"

"I have three grains of corn," she answered. "What is that to thee?"

"Give me one of them," cried Death, "to plant in my garden; only one of them, and I will go away."

"I will not give thee anything," said Avarice, and she hid her hand in the fold of her raiment.

And Death laughed, and took a cup, and dipped it into a pool of water, and

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out of the cup rose Ague. She passed through the great multitude, and a third of them lay dead. A cold mist followed her, and the water snakes ran by her side.

And when Avarice saw that a third of the multitude was dead she beat her breast and wept. She beat her barren bosom, and cried aloud. "Thou hast slain a third of my servants," she cried; "get thee gone. There is war in the mountains of Tartary, and the kings of each side are calling to thee. The Afghans have slain the black ox, and are marching to battle. They have beaten upon their shields with their spears, and have put on their helmets of iron. What is my valley to thee, that thou shouldst tarry in it? Get thee gone, and come here no more."

"Nay," answered Death, "but till thou hast given me a grain of corn I will not go."

But Avarice shut her hand and clenched her teeth. "I will not give thee anything," she muttered.

And Death laughed, and took a cup, and stone, and threw it into the forest, and out of a thicket of wild hemlock came Fever in a robe of flame. She passed through the multitude, and touched them, and each man that she touched died. The grass withered beneath her feet as she walked.

And Avarice shuddered, and put ashes on her head. "Thou art cruel," she cried; "thou art cruel. There is famine in the walled cities of India, and the cisterns of Samarcand have run dry. There is famine in the walled cities of Egypt, and the locusts have come up from the desert. The Nile has not overflowed its banks, and the priests have cursed Isis and Osiris. Get thee gone to those who need thee, and leave me my servants."

"Nay," answered Death, "but till thou hast given me a grain of corn, I will not go."

"I will not give thee anything," said Avarice.

And Death laughed again, and he whistled through his fingers, and a woman came flying through the air. Plague was written upon her forehead, and a crowd of lean vultures wheeled round her. She covered the valley with her wings, and no man was left alive.

And Avarice fled shrieking through the forest, and Death leaped upon his red horse and galloped away, and his galloping was faster than the wind.

And out of the slime at the bottom of the valley crept dragons and horrible things with scales, and the jackals came trotting along the sand, sniffing up the air with their nostrils.

And the young king wept, and said: "Who were these men, and for what were they seeking?"

"For rubies for a king's crown," answered one who stood behind him.

And the young king started, and, turning round, he saw a man habited as a pilgrim and holding in his hand a mirror of silver.

And he grew pale, and said: "For what king?"

And the pilgrim answered: "Look in this mirror, and thou shalt see him."

And he looked in the mirror, and, seeing his own face, he gave a great cry and woke, and the bright sunlight was streaming into the room, and from the trees of the garden and pleasure the birds were singing.

And the chamberlain and the high officers of state came in and made obeisance to him, and the pages brought him the robe of tissue gold, and set the crown and the scepter before him.

And the young king looked at them, and they were beautiful. More beautiful were they than aught that he had ever seen. But he remembered his dreams, and he said to his lords: "Take these things away, for I will not wear them."

And the courtiers were amazed, and some of them laughed, for they thought that he was jesting.

But he spake sternly to them again, and said: "Take these things away, and hide them from me. Though it be the day of my coronation, I will not wear them. For on the loom of Sorrow, and by the white hands of Pain, has this my robe been woven. There is Blood in the heart of the ruby, and Death in the heart of the pearl." And he told them his three dreams.

And when the courtiers heard them they looked at each other and whispered, saying: "Surely he is mad; for what is a dream but a dream, and a vision but a vision? They are not real things that one should heed them. And what have we to do with the lives of those who toil for us? Shall a man not eat bread till he has seen the sower, nor drink wine till he has talked with the vine dresser?"

And the chamberlain spake to the young king, and said: "My lord, I pray thee set aside these black thoughts of thine, and put on this fair robe, and set this crown upon thy head. For how shall the people know that thou art a king, if thou hast not a king's raiment?"

And the young king looked at him. "Is it so, indeed?" he questioned. "Will they not know me for a king if I have not a king's raiment?"

"They will not know thee, my lord," cried the chamberlain.

"I had thought that there had been men who were kinglike," he answered, "but it may be as thou sayest. And yet I will not wear this robe, nor will I be crowned with this crown, but even as I came to the palace so will I go forth from it."

And he bade them all leave him, save one page whom he kept as his companion, a lad a year younger than himself. Him he kept for his service, and when he had bathed himself in clear water, he opened a great, painted chest, and from it he took the leathern tunic and rough

sheepskin cloak that he had worn when he had watched on the hillside the shaggy goats of the goatherd. These he put on, and in his hand he took his rude shepherd's staff.

And the little page opened his big blue eyes in wonder, and said smiling to him: "My lord, I see thy robe and thy scepter, but where is thy crown?"

And the young king plucked a spray of wild brier that was climbing over the balcony, and bent it, and made a circlet of it, and set it on his own head.

"This shall be my crown," he answered.

And thus attired he passed out of his chamber into the great hall where the nobles were waiting for him.

And the nobles made merry, and some of them cried out to him, "My lord, the people wait for their king, and thou showest them a beggar," and others were wrath and said: "He brings shame upon our state, and is unworthy to be our master." But he answered them not a word, but passed on, and went down the bright porphyry staircase, and out through the gates of bronze, and mounted upon his horse, and rode toward the cathedral, the little page running beside him.

And the people laughed and said, "It is the king's fool who is riding by," and they mocked him.

And he drew rein and said: "Nay, but I am the king." And he told them his three dreams.

And a man came out of the crowd, and spake bitterly to him, and said: "Sir, knowest thou not that out of the luxury of the rich cometh the life of the poor? By your pomp we are nurtured, and your vices give us bread. To toil for a hard master is bitter, but to have no master to toil for is more bitter still. Thinkest thou that the ravens will feed us? And what cure hast thou for these things? Wilt thou say to the buyer, 'Thou shalt buy for so

much,' and to the seller, 'Thou shalt sell at this price?' I trow not. Therefore go back to thy palace and put on thy purple and fine linen. What hast thou to do with us, and what we suffer?"

"Are not the rich and the poor brothers?" asked the young king.

"Aye," answered the man, "and the name of the rich brother is Cain."

And the young king's eyes filled with tears, and he rode on through the murmurs of the people, and the little page grew afraid and left him.

And when he reached the great portal of the cathedral, the soldiers thrust their halberts out and said: "What dost thou seek here? None enters by this door but the king."

And his face flushed with anger, and he said to them, "I am the king," and waved their halberts aside and passed in.

And when the old bishop saw him coming in his goatherd's dress, he rose up in wonder from his throne, and went to meet him, and said to him: "My son, is this a king's apparel? And with what crown shall I crown thee, and what scepter shall I place in thy hand? Surely this should be to thee a day of joy, and not a day of abasement."

"Shall Joy wear what Grief has fashioned?" said the young king. And he told him his three dreams.

And when the bishop had heard them he knit his brows, and said: "My son, I am an old man, and in the winter of my days, and I know that many evil things are done in the wide world. The fierce robbers come down from the mountains and carry off the little children, and sell them to the Moors. The lions lie in wait for the caravans, and leap upon the camels. The wild boar roots up the corn in the valley, and the foxes gnaw the vines upon the hill. The pirates lay waste the sea coast and burn the ships of the fishermen, and take their nets from them. In the salt

marshes live the lepers; they have houses of wattled reeds, and none may come nigh them. The beggars wander through the cities, and eat their food with the dogs. Canst thou make these things not to be? Wilt thou take the leper for thy bedfellow, and set the beggar at thy board? Shall the lion do thy bidding, and the wild boar obey thee? Is not He who made misery wiser than thou art? Wherefore I praise thee not for this that thou hast done, but I bid thee ride back to the palace and make thy face glad, and put on the raiment that besemeth a king, and with the crown of gold I will crown thee, and the scepter of pearl will I place in thy hand. And as for thy dreams, think no more of them. The burden of this world is too great for one man to bear, and the world's sorrow too heavy for one heart to suffer."

"Sayest thou that in this house?" said the young king, and he strode past the bishop, and climbed up the steps of the altar, and stood before the image of Christ.

He stood before the image of Christ, and on his right hand and on his left were the marvelous vessels of gold, the chalice with the yellow wine, and the vial with the holy oil. He knelt before the image of Christ, and the candles burned brightly by the jeweled shrine, and the smoke of the incense curled in thin blue wreaths through the dome. He bowed his head in prayer and the priests in their stiff copes crept away from the altar.

And suddenly a wild tumult came from the street outside, and in entered the nobles with drawn swords and nodding plumes, and shields of polished steel. "Where is this dreamer of dreams?" they cried. "Where is this king, who is appareled like a beggar—this boy who brings shame upon our state? Surely we will slay him, for he is unworthy to rule over us."

And the young king bowed his head

again, and prayed, and when he had finished his prayer he rose up, and, turning round, he looked at them sadly.

And lo! through the painted windows came the sunlight streaming upon him, and the sunbeams wove round him a tissued robe that was fairer than the robe that had been fashioned for his pleasure. The dead staff blossomed, and bare lilies that were whiter than pearls. The dry thorn blossomed, and bare roses that were redder than rubies. Whiter than fine pearls were the lilies, and their stems were of bright silver. Redder than male rubies were the roses, and their leaves were of beaten gold.

He stood there in the raiment of a king, and the gates of the jeweled shrine flew open, and from the crystal of the many-rayed monstrance shone a marvel-

ous and mystical light. He stood there in a king's raiment, and the Glory of God filled the place, and the saints in their carven niches seemed to move. In the fair raiment of a king he stood before them, and the organ pealed out its music, and the trumpeters blew upon their trumpets, and the singing boys sang.

And the people fell upon their knees in awe, and the nobles sheathed their swords and did homage, and the bishop's face grew pale, and his hands trembled. "A greater than I hath crowned thee," he cried, and he knelt before him.

And the young king came down from the high altar, and passed home through the midst of the people. But no man dared look upon his face, for it was like the face of an angel.



"TRUTH DOTH TRUTH DESERVE"

WHO doth desire that chaste his wife should be,
First be he true, for truth doth truth deserve;
Then such be he that she his worth may see,
And one man still credit with his preserve.
Not toying kind, not causelessly unkind;
Not stirring thoughts, nor yet denying right;
Not spying faults, nor in plain errors blind;
Never hard hand, nor ever reins too light;
As far from want, as far from vain expense—
The one doth force, the latter doth entice—
Allow good company, but keep from thence
All filthy mouths that glory in their vice.
This done, thou hast no more, but leave the rest
To virtue, fortune, time, and woman's breast.

Philip Sidney.

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Mademoiselle Perle

WHAT a strange notion indeed of mine to choose Mademoiselle Perle for queen this evening!

Every year I go to my old friend Chantal's for Twelfth-night. My father, whose most intimate friend he was, used to take me there when a child. I have kept up the custom, and no doubt will continue to keep it up as long as I live, and as long as there is a Chantal in this world.

The Chantals, I ought to say, lead a singular existence: they live at Paris as if they were at Grasse, Yvetot, or Pont-à-Mousson.

They have a house with a small garden near the observatory. There they live their own life as if they were in the country. Of Paris, the real Paris, they have no knowledge and no suspicion: they are so far, far away from it! Sometimes, however, they take a journey, a long journey, there. Madame Chantal goes to lay in supplies, as they

say in the family. This is how they lay in supplies.

Mademoiselle Perle, who keeps the keys of the pantry presses—for the linen presses are administered by the mistress of the house herself—Mademoiselle notices that the sugar is running down, that the preserves are exhausted, that there is not much more left at the bottom of the coffee sack.

Thus warned against famine, Madame Chantal inspects the remains, and takes notes in a notebook. Then, when she has written a great many figures, she plunges first into long calculations, then into long discussions with Mademoiselle Perle. The upshot of it is, however, that they come to an agreement and settle upon the quantities of each article that they will provide for a quarter: sugar, rice, prunes, coffee, preserves, tins of green peas, of haricot beans, of lobster, salt and smoked fish, and so on, and so on.

This done, they fix the day for their

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shopping, and set out in a cab—a cab with a rail—to a biggish grocer, whose shop is across the bridges, in the new districts.

Madame Chantal and Mademoiselle Perle make this expedition in company, mysteriously, and come home at dinner time quite exhausted, though still excited, and shaken up in the cab, the top of which is covered with parcels and bags, like a removal van.

For the Chantals all Paris on the other side of the Seine is the new districts—districts inhabited by a strange population, noisy, not too honest, that passes its days in dissipation, its nights in feasting, and makes ducks and drakes of its money. Nevertheless the young ladies are now and again taken to the theater, the Opéra-Comique or the Théâtre Français, when the piece is approved by the newspaper that M. Chantal reads.

The young ladies are now nineteen and seventeen years old; they are two pretty girls, tall and fresh, very well brought up, too well brought up, so well brought up that they pass unnoticed like two pretty dolls. It would never enter my head to pay attentions or to pay court to Mesdemoiselles Chantal; one scarcely dares to speak of them, they seem so immaculate, and as for bowing to them, one almost fears he is taking a liberty.

As for their father, he is a charming man, very well informed, very frank, very cordial, but whose one desire is repose and peace and quietness, and who is largely responsible for thus mummifying his family in order to live as he desires in stagnant immobility. He reads a great deal, is fond of conversation, is easily touched. The absence of all contact, elbowing and collisions has made him very sensitive and thin-skinned. The least thing excites him, agitates him, and hurts him.

Yet the Chantals do have some acquaintances, but restricted acquaint-

ances, carefully selected in their neighborhood. They also exchange two or three annual visits with some relatives who live at a distance.

As for me, I dine with them on the fifteenth of August and on Twelfth-night. The latter is part of my duty, like a Catholic's Easter communion.

On the fifteenth of August some friends are invited, but on Twelfth-night I am the only guest.

So this year, as in other years, I have been dining at the Chantals' to celebrate Epiphany.

According to custom I embraced M. Chantal, Madame Chantal and Mademoiselle Perle, and made a profound bow to Mesdemoiselles Louise and Pauline. They asked me a thousand questions about town gossip, about politics, about popular opinion on the events in Tonkin, and about our representatives. Madame Chantal, a stout lady, whose ideas always give me the impression that they are squared like so many hewn stones, had a habit of enouncing the phrase, "That will bear evil fruit some day," as the conclusion of every political discussion. Why have I always imagined that Madame Chantal's ideas are square? I do not know, the fact remains that everything she says assumes this shape in my mind; a square, a big square with four equal angles. There are other persons whose ideas always seem to be round and rolling like circles. No sooner have they commenced a phrase on some subject, than it goes rolling and issues in a dozen, a score, fifty round ideas, big and little, which I see running one after the other to the farthest horizon. Other persons, again, have pointed ideas. But that is neither here nor there.

We sat down to table as usual, and the dinner passed without anything being said worth remembering.

At dessert, the Twelfth-cake was brought in. Now, every year M. Chan-

tal was king. Whether that was a repeated coincidence or a family arrangement, I do not know, but he used infallibly to find the bean in his share of the cake, and used to proclaim Madame Chantal queen. So I was astounded to feel in a mouthful of cake something very hard, which almost broke a tooth for me. I carefully removed the thing from my mouth and saw a little china doll no bigger than a bean. In my surprise, I exclaimed, "Ah!" They looked at me, and Chantal clapped his hands and shouted:

"Gaston's got it! Gaston's got it! Long live the king! Long live the king!"

Everybody repeated in chorus, "Long live the king!" and I blushed up to my ears, as one will blush, for no reason whatever, in rather foolish situations. I sat looking down at the cloth, with the scrap of china in my finger and thumb, forcing a laugh, and at a loss what to say or do, when Chantal resumed:

"Now you must choose a queen."

At that I was overwhelmed. In a second a thousand thoughts, a thousand suppositions flashed through my mind. Did they mean me to single out one of the Chantal girls? Was this a plan for making me say which one I preferred? Was it a gentle, slight, insensible impulse from the parents toward a possible marriage? The notion of marriage is constantly lurking in all those houses with grown-up daughters, and takes all sorts of forms, all sorts of disguises, all sorts of measures. I felt horribly afraid of compromising myself, and also excessively timid in face of the obstinately correct and composed attitude of Mesdemoiselles Louise and Pauline. To elect one of them to the detriment of the other was, to my mind, as difficult as to choose between two drops of water; and, besides, I was dreadfully scared by the fear of risking myself in an affair where I should be led on to

marriage against my will by procedures so discreet, so imperceptible, and so calm as this trumpery royalty.

But all at once I had an inspiration, and I offered the symbolical doll to Mademoiselle Perle. They were all surprised at first; then they undoubtedly appreciated my delicacy and my discretion, for they applauded furiously.

"Long live the queen, long live the queen!" they shouted.

As for her, poor old maid, she had lost countenance entirely: she trembled, quite scared, and stammered:

"Oh, no—oh, no—oh, no—not me. I pray you—not me—I pray you!"

At that I considered Mademoiselle Perle for the first time in my life, and began to ask myself what she was.

I was accustomed to seeing her in that house, as one sees the old tapestry armchairs on which one has sat from childhood, without ever noticing them. Some day, no one knows why, because a sunbeam falls on the chair, one says, "Why, this is very interesting." And one discovers that the wood has been wrought by an artist, and that the covering is remarkable. I had never taken any notice of Mademoiselle Perle.

She was a member of the Chantal household, and nothing more. But why? On what footing? She was a tall, thin person, who kept herself in the background, but was not insignificant. They treated her friendly, better than a housekeeper, not so well as a relative. Now, however, on a sudden I grasped some fine distinctions which I had not troubled about before! Madame Chantal said, "Perle," the girls, "Mademoiselle Perle," and Chantal always called her "Mademoiselle," though perhaps more respectfully than they did.

I began to consider her. What was her age? Forty? Yes, forty. She was not an old maid; she was growing old. This observation suddenly occurred to me. She did her hair, dressed, adorned herself in a ridiculous fashion, yet for

all that she was not ridiculous; she had such a simple, natural grace about her, a veiled grace, studiously concealed. What a strange creature, to be sure! Why had I never observed her better? She did her hair in a grotesque fashion, in little, droll, old-fashioned ringlets. Yet under this antiquated virgin's hair-dressing appeared a broad, calm forehead, scored by two deep wrinkles, two wrinkles of long-continued griefs, then two blue eyes, large and gentle, so timid, so startled, so humble, two beautiful eyes that had remained so innocent; so full of maiden astonishment, of youthful sensations, and also of disappointments that had entered into them and softened without troubling them.

Her whole face was intelligent and discreet, one of those faces which have toned down without being worn out or faded by the fatigues or the great emotions of life.

What a pretty mouth! And what pretty teeth! Yet one would have said that she dared not smile!

And suddenly I compared her with Madame Chantal! Why, to be sure! Mademoiselle Perle was handsomer, a hundred times handsomer, more intelligent, more noble, more dignified.

I was stupefied with the result of my observations. Champagne was poured out. I held my glass toward the queen, and proposed her health in a well-turned compliment. She would have liked, I could see, to hide her face in her napkin. Then, as she dipped her lips in the clear wine, every one cried, "The queen drinks, the queen drinks!" At that she blushed all over and choked, but I could see that she was greatly beloved in that house.

As soon as dinner was over, Chantal took me by the arm. It was the hour for his cigar—a sacred hour. When he was alone, he went out to smoke it in the street; when he had any one to

dinner, they went up to the billiard room, and he smoked as he played. This evening they had even lighted a fire in the billiard room in honor of Twelfth-night, and my old friend took his cue—a very thin cue, which he chalked with great care; then he said:

"You lead off, my boy!"

For he always called me "my boy," in spite of my five-and-twenty years; but then he had seen me when I was a baby.

So I commenced the game; I made some cannons, and missed others; but, as Mademoiselle Perle was always running through my mind, I suddenly asked:

"I say, M. Chantal, is Mademoiselle Perle any relation of yours?"

He stopped playing in great surprise, and looked at me.

"What, don't you know? Have you never heard Mademoiselle Perle's story?"

"No."

"Did your father never tell you?"

"No."

"Well, well, that is strange! That is indeed strange! Why, it is quite a romance!"

He was silent; then began again:

"If you only knew how singular it is that you should ask me that question to-day, on Twelfth-night!"

"Why?"

"Ah! Why? Listen. It was forty-one years ago, forty-one years this very day, Epiphany. We were then living at Roüy-le-Tors, on the ramparts. But I must first describe the house, in order that you may understand properly. Roüy is built on a slope, or rather on a knoll which commands a wide extent of that country. We had a house there with a fine hanging garden, supported in the air by the old city walls. So the house was in the town, in the street, while the garden overlooked the plain. There was also a postern gate from this garden to the country, at the foot of a

secret staircase which went down in the thickness of the walls, like those read of in romances. A road passed by this gate, which was furnished with a big bell, for the peasants used to bring their provisions that way to escape the long round about.

"You can see the places, can't you? Well, that year, on Twelfth-day, it had been snowing for a week. It looked like the end of the world. It chilled our very soul when we went to the ramparts to look at the plain, the great white landscape, all white, icy, shining like varnish. It looked as if the good Lord had wrapped up the earth to send it to the lumber room of old worlds. I can assure you that it was very dreary.

"The whole family was together at that moment, and we were numerous, very numerous: my father, my mother, my uncle and aunt, my two brothers, and my four cousins; pretty girls they were. I am married to the youngest. Of all that company there are only three alive now: my wife, myself, and my sister-in-law at Marseilles. Bless me, how a family slips away! It makes me tremble when I think of it. I was fifteen then; now I am fifty-six.

"Well, we were going to keep Twelfth-night, and we were very merry—very merry! All were in the drawing-room waiting dinner, when my elder brother, Jacques, suddenly said, 'There's a dog been howling in the plain for the last ten minutes. It must be some poor beast that is lost.'

"We had not finished speaking when the garden bell rang. It had a deep, church-bell tone, which made one think of the dead. We all shivered at the sound. My father called the servant and told him to go and look. There was perfect silence as we waited; we were thinking of the snow that covered all the earth. When the man returned, he declared that he had seen nothing. The dog was still howling incessantly, and

the sound came from exactly the same place.

"We sat down to table, but we were still a little upset, especially we young people. All went nicely until the joint, when, hark, the bell began ringing again, three times in succession, three great, long peals, which thrilled us to our finger tips and made us catch our breath. We sat looking at each other, our forks in the air, still listening, seized with a sort of supernatural fear.

"At last my mother spoke: 'It is extraordinary that they should have waited so long before coming back. Do not go alone, Baptiste; one of these gentlemen will go with you.'

"My Uncle François rose. He was a Hercules, very proud of his strength, and afraid of nothing on earth. My father said to him, 'Take a gun. You never know what it may be.'

"But my uncle only took a stick, and went out at once with the servant.

"We others remained behind, trembling with terror and anxiety, without eating, without speaking. My father tried to reassure us. 'You will see,' he said, 'that it will be some beggar or some traveler lost in the snow. After he rang the first time, seeing that the door was not opened at once, he has tried to find his way, then, failing to do so, he has come back to our door.'

"We felt as if our uncle's absence lasted an hour. Then he returned furious and swearing. 'There's nothing, as I'm alive! Some one's playing a trick! There's nothing but that confounded dog howling a hundred yards away from the walls. If I had had my gun, I'd have shot him to make him quiet!'

"We sat down again, but we all continued anxious. We felt that this was not the end of it, that something was going to happen, and that presently the bell would ring again.

"And it did sound, at the very moment when we were cutting the Twelfth-cake. All the men got up to-

gether. My Uncle François, who had drunk some champagne, declared that he was going to massacre *it*, so furiously that my mother and my aunt caught hold of him to stop him. My father, in spite of being quite calm and not very fit—he dragged one leg ever after it had been broken by a fall from a horse—declared in his turn that he wanted to know what it was, and that he was going. My brothers, aged nineteen and twenty, ran to get their guns; and, as no one paid much attention to me, I possessed myself of a rook rifle and so prepared to accompany the expedition.

"It set out at once. My father and my uncle led, with Baptiste carrying a lantern. My brothers Jacques and Paul followed, and I brought up the rear in spite of my mother's entreaties, who remained with her sister and my cousins on the doorstep.

"The snow had begun again the last hour, and the trees were laden. The pines were bending under the heavy, dusky mantle, like white pyramids, or enormous sugar loaves; and through the gray curtain of fine, hurrying flakes it was almost impossible to make out the smaller shrubs, all pale in the gloom. The snow was falling so quickly that nothing else could be seen ten paces off. But the lantern threw a great light before us. When we began to descend the corkscrew staircase hollowed in the thickness of the wall, I was afraid in good earnest. I felt as if some one was walking behind me; as if some one was about to catch me by the shoulders and carry me off; and I wanted to go home. But, as I should have had to go all the way back through the garden, I did not dare.

"I heard the door to the plain being opened; then my uncle began to swear afresh. 'Hang it! he's off again. If I could see his shadow, I'd not miss him, the——'

"It was eerie to see the plain, or

rather to feel it was there before one; for it could not be seen; all that was visible was an endless veil of snow, above, below, in front, to right, to left, everywhere.

"My uncle spoke again: 'Wait, there is the dog howling. I'll go and show it how I can shoot. That will always be something.'

"But my father, who was a kindly man, replied, 'Better go and look for the poor animal that's crying with hunger. It's barking for help, poor wretch. It's calling like a human being in distress. Let's go to it.'

"And we set out through that curtain, through that dense, unceasing fall, through that powder that filled the night and the air, that moved, floated, fell, and froze the flesh as it melted, froze as if it would burn, with a short, sharp sting on the skin at each touch of the tiny white flakes.

"We sank to the knees in the soft, chill dust, and had to step very high to walk at all. As we advanced the dog's bark became clearer and louder. My uncle cried, 'There it is!' We halted to observe it, as one ought to do on encountering an unknown enemy in the dark.

"For my part I could see nothing; then I came up with the others, and I made it out. The dog was a fearful and fantastic sight: a great, black dog, a sheep dog, with shaggy hair and a head like a wolf, standing on all fours at the very end of the long beam of light cast by the lantern on the snow. He did not move; he was quiet now, and was looking at us.

"My uncle said, 'It is strange, he does not come at us, and he does not run away. I have a good mind to take a shot at him.'

"But my father said decidedly, 'No, we must catch him.'

"Thereupon my brother Jacques said, 'But he is not alone. There's something beside him.'

"And there was something beside him, something gray, indistinct. We began to advance again carefully.

"When the dog saw us approaching, he squatted down on his hindquarters. He did not look savage; rather he seemed pleased that he had succeeded in attracting somebody.

"My father went straight up to him and caressed him. The dog licked his hands, and we saw that he was tied to the wheel of a little carriage, a sort of toy carriage completely enveloped in three or four woolen wraps. We took these cloths off carefully, and when Baptiste held his lantern to the door of the go-cart, which was like a kennel on wheels, we saw a little baby inside, asleep.

"We were so dumfounded that we could not utter a word. My father was the first to recover himself, and, as he was a large-hearted man, and somewhat of a visionary, he laid his hand on the top of the carriage and said, 'Poor forsaken child, you shall be one of us!' And he ordered my brother Jacques to wheel our find in front of us.

"And my father continued, thinking aloud:

"Some love child whose poor mother has come and rung at my door this Epiphany night, thinking of the Christ child.'

"He stopped again, and four times shouted through the night at the pitch of his voice to the four corners of the heavens, 'We have taken it up!' Then, putting his hand on his brother's shoulder, he murmured, 'If you had shot at the dog, François—'

"My uncle gave no answer, but he made a great sign of the cross in the darkness, for he was very devout, in spite of his swaggering airs.

"The dog had been untied, and followed us.

"I can assure you our return to the house was a pretty sight indeed. First we had a lot of trouble to get the car-

riage up the rampart stair; but we managed at last, and wheeled it into the hall.

"How amused, and pleased, and frightened mamma was! As for my four little cousins—the youngest was six—they were like four hens around a nest. At last the baby, which was still sleeping, was taken out of its carriage. It was a girl, about six weeks old. And in its clothes we found ten thousand francs in gold—yes, ten thousand francs, which papa invested for her dowry. So she was not the child of poor parents, but perhaps the child of a nobleman and some small citizen's daughter, or else— We formed a thousand conjectures, but we never learned anything—no, not a thing—not a thing. Even the dog was not recognized by any one. He was strange to these parts. In any case, he or she who came three times and rang at our door must have known my parents well, to have chosen them in this way.

"So that is how Mademoiselle Perle made her entrance at six weeks' age to the Chantal family.

We did not call her Mademoiselle Perle until later, however. She was baptized Marie Simonne Claire; Claire was to serve as her surname.

"I can tell you it was a funny return to the dining room with the small mite, now awake, who gazed about her at the people and the lights with her big, wondering blue eyes.

"We sat down once more and the cake was cut up. I was king, and I chose Mademoiselle Perle as my queen, just as you did a little ago. She was all unconscious, then, of the honor that was done her.

"Well, the child was adopted and brought up as one of the family. She grew up; years passed on. She was a nice, gentle, obedient child. Every one loved her, and she would have been dreadfully spoiled if my mother had not prevented that.

"My mother was a woman of order and hierarchy. She consented to treat little Claire as she did her own sons, but at the same time she took care that the distance between us was clearly marked, and the situation distinctly laid down.

"Therefore, as soon as the child was old enough to understand, she explained her story to her, and gently, indeed tenderly, impressed upon the little one's mind that her relation to the Chantals was that of an adopted daughter, welcome, no doubt, but still a stranger.

"Claire grasped the situation with singular intelligence, and with surprising intuition. She learned to accept and keep the place assigned to her with such tact, grace, and delicacy that it moved my father to tears.

"My mother, too, was so touched by the passionate gratitude and the somewhat timid devotion of the darling, tender creature, that she took to calling her 'my daughter.' Sometimes, when the little one had done something good or delicate, my mother would push her spectacles up on her brow, always a sign of emotion with her, and repeat, 'Why, she's a pearl, a regular pearl, the child!' The name stuck to little Claire, who became and remained for us Mademoiselle Perle."

M. Chantal ceased speaking. He was seated on the billiard table, dangling his feet, his left hand playing with a ball, while his right fiddled with a cloth which was used for wiping the chalk marks off the scoring slate, and which from its use we called the chalk cloth. Rather red, his voice indistinct, he was speaking to himself now, lost in his recollections, going gently through the bygone things and the old events that were waking in his mind, as one strolls through the old gardens of the home where one was brought up, and where each tree, each path, each plant, the prickly hollies, the sweet-smelling

laurels, the yews, whose fat, red berries crush between one's fingers, evoke at every step some little fact of our past life, one of those insignificant and delicious facts that make up the very foundation, the very warp of existence.

As for me, I stood there facing him, my back leaning against the wall, and my hands supported on my unused billiard cue.

After a minute he resumed:

"Ah, me! How pretty she was at eighteen—and gracious—and perfect! Ah! what a pretty—pretty—pretty and kind—and good—and charming girl! She had eyes—blue eyes—transparent—clear—the like of which I have never seen—never!"

He lapsed into silence again. I asked: "Why has she never married?"

He replied, not to me, but to the word "married" that had been let fall:

"Why? Why? She never wished to—never wished. Though she had thirty thousand francs dowry, and was asked several times, she never wished to! She seemed sad in those days. That was when I married my cousin, little Charlotte, my wife, to whom I had been engaged for six years."

I looked at M. Chantal, and it seemed to me that I saw into his soul, that I suddenly saw into one of those humble and cruel dramas of honorable hearts, upright hearts, of hearts without reproach, into one of those mute, unexplored hearts, which no one has understood, not even those who are their uncomplaining and resigned victims.

And, suddenly impelled by a daring curiosity, I blurted out:

"Should not you have married her, M. Chantal?"

He trembled, looked at me, and said: "I? Marry whom?"

"Mademoiselle Perle."

"Why so?"

"Because you loved her better than your cousin."

He looked at me with strange, round, startled eyes; then he stammered:

"I loved her—I? How? Who told you that?"

"Why, any one can see it. And that's why you were so long in marrying your cousin, who waited six years for you."

He dropped the ball that he was holding in his left hand, seized the chalk cloth with both hands, and, hiding his face with it, began to sob into it. He wept in a distressing, ridiculous way, as a sponge weeps when it is squeezed, from his eyes and nose and mouth all at once. And he coughed and hawked, blew his nose into the chalk cloth, wiped his eyes, sneezed, began running again from every aperture in his face, with a throaty noise that suggesting gargling.

As for me, frightened and ashamed, I wanted to make my escape and was at my wits' end to know what to say, or to do, or try.

And suddenly Madame Chantal's voice sounded on the stairs.

"Will you soon be done with your smoke?"

I opened the door and called, "Yes, madame, we are coming down."

Then I rushed to her husband, and seizing him by the elbows, said, "M. Chantal! My good friend Chantal, listen! Your wife is calling you; pull yourself together, pull yourself together at once! We must go downstairs; pull yourself together!"

He stammered, "Yes—yes! I'm coming. Poor girl! I'm coming—tell her I'll be there in a moment."

And he began conscientiously to wipe his face with the cloth that had been wiping all the marks off the slate for two or three years. When he finished, he showed half white, half red, his brow, his nose, his cheeks, his chin all smeared with chalk, and his eyes swollen and still full of tears.

I took him by the hands and dragged him into his room, murmuring, "I beg your pardon, I do indeed, M. Chantal,

for having given you pain, but—I did not know—you—you understand."

He pressed my hand. "Yes—yes—there are some awkward moments."

Then he plunged his face into the basin. When he lifted his head he still did not look presentable, but I thought of a little ruse. As he looked rather uncomfortably at himself in the glass, I said to him, "It will do if you tell them that you have some dust in your eye, and you can let them see it watering as much as you like."

So he went downstairs, rubbing his eyes with his handkerchief. They made a fuss about him; every one wanted to look for the speck of dust, which was not to be found, and they related similar cases in which the doctor had eventually to be called in.

As for me, I had rejoined Mademoiselle Perle, and I was watching her, tormented by a burning curiosity, a curiosity which was becoming torture. She must really have been very pretty once, with her gentle eyes, so large, so calm, so open that they looked as if she never closed them as other people do. Her dress was rather ridiculous; a regular old maid's toilet, and, without making her look a fright, did not set her off.

I seemed to see into her soul, as I had seen into M. Chantal's a little before, as if I surveyed from end to end her humble, simple, devoted life; but a necessity forced my lips, an imperious necessity of questioning her, of learning if she, too, had loved him; if she had suffered like him from that long-drawn sorrow, secret and acute, which none knows, none sees, none suspects, but which finds vent at night, in the solitude of the darkened room. I looked at her, I saw her heart beating under her muslin bodice, and I asked myself whether that sweet, frank face had groaned night by night in the moist thickness of her pillow, and sobbed, her body racked by convulsions, in the fever of her burning bed.

And I said to her, cautiously, as children do when they break a trinket to see inside it, 'If you had seen M. Chantal crying just now, you would have been sorry for him.'

She trembled. "What? He was crying?"

"Yes, he was crying!"

"And why was he?"

She seemed very much perturbed. I replied:

"Because of you."

"Because of me?"

"Yes. He was telling me how much he used to love you, and what it cost him to marry his present wife instead of you."

Her pale face seemed to me to lengthen a little; her eyes, always open—her calm eyes closed suddenly, so quickly that they seemed to have closed forever. She slipped from her chair to the floor, and collapsed there gently, gradually, as a fallen veil might have done.

I cried, "Help, help! Mademoiselle Perle is unwell!"

Madame Chantal and her daughters rushed to her, and, as they went for

water and a napkin and vinegar, I got my hat and escaped.

I hurried away, my heart torn, my mind full of remorse and regret. And yet now and again I was glad; I felt as if I had done something commendable and necessary.

I kept asking myself, "Was I wrong? Was I right?" They had that in their souls like a bullet in a healed-up wound. Will they not be happier now? It was too late to renew their torture, and not too late for them to remember with fondness.

And perhaps some evening next spring, moved by a moonbeam falling through the branches on the grass at their feet, they will take each other's hands and clasp them in memory of all that suppressed, cruel suffering; and perhaps, too, that brief clasp will send through their veins a little of that thrill which otherwise they would never have known, and will excite in those dead ones, resuscitated in an instant, the swift, divine sensation of that intoxication, that madness, which gives lovers more happiness in one thrill than other men can gather in a lifetime.



"MUSIC WHEN SOFT VOICES DIE"

MUSIC, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory.
Odors, when sweet violets sicken,
Live within the sense they quicken.

Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,
Are heap'd for the beloved's bed;
And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,
Love itself shall slumber on.

Percy Bysshe Shelley.

D.H.^{by} Lawrence

Author of

"Women in Love"



The LAST LAUGH

THERE was a little snow on the ground, and the church clock had just struck midnight. Hampstead in the night of winter for once was looking pretty, with clean, white earth and lamps for moon, and dark sky above the lamps.

A confused little sound of voices, a gleam of hidden yellow light. And then the garden door of a tall, dark Georgian house suddenly opened, and three people confusedly emerged. A girl in a dark-blue coat and fur turban, very erect; a fellow with a little dispatch case, slouching; a thin man with a red beard, bareheaded, peering out of the gateway down the hill that swung in a curve downward toward London.

"Look at it! A new world!" cried the man in the beard ironically, as he stood on the step and peered out.

"No, Lorenzo! It's only whitewash!" cried the young man in the overcoat. His voice was handsome, resonant, plangent, with a weary, sardonic touch.

As he turned back, his face was dark in shadow.

The girl with the erect, alert head, like a bird, turned back to the two men.

"What was that?" she asked, in her quick, quiet voice.

"Lorenzo says it's a new world. I say it's only whitewash," cried the man in the street.

She stood still and lifted her woolly, gloved finger. She was deaf and was taking it in.

Yes, she had got it. She gave a quick, chuckling laugh, glanced very quickly at the man in the bowler hat, then back at the man in the stucco gateway, who was grinning like a satyr and waving good-by.

"Good-by, Lorenzo!" came the resonant, weary cry of the man in the bowler hat.

"Good-by!" came the sharp, night-bird call of the girl.

The green gate slammed, then the inner door. The two were alone in the

street, save for the policeman at the corner. The road curved steeply downhill.

"You'd better mind how you *step!*" shouted the man in the bowler hat, leaning near the erect, sharp girl, and slouching in his walk. She paused a moment, to make sure what he had said.

"Don't mind me, I'm quite all right. Mind yourself!" she said quickly. At that very moment he gave a wild lurch on the slippery snow, but managed to save himself from falling. She watched him, on tiptoes of alertness. His bowler hat bounced away in the thin snow. They were under a lamp near the curve. As he ducked for his hat he showed a bald spot, just like a tonsure, among his dark, thin, rather curly hair. And when he looked up at her, with his thick, black brows sardonically arched, and his rather hooked nose self-derisive, jamming his hat on again, he seemed like a satanic young priest. His face had beautiful lines, like a faun, and a doubtful, martyred expression. A sort of faun on the cross, with all the malice of the complication.

"Did you hurt yourself?" she asked, in her quick, cool, unemotional way.

"No!" he shouted derisively.

"Give me the machine, won't you?" she said, holding out her woolly hand. "I believe I'm safer."

"Do you *want* it?" he shouted.

"Yes, I'm sure I'm safer."

He handed her the little brown dispatch case, which was really a Marconi listening machine for her deafness. She marched erect as ever. He shoved his hands deep in his overcoat pockets and slouched along beside her, as if he wouldn't make his legs firm. The road curved down in front of them, clean and pale with snow under the lamps. A motor car came churning up. A few dark figures slipped away into the dark recesses of the houses, like fishes among rocks above a sea bed of

white sand. On the left was a tuft of trees sloping upward into the dark.

He kept looking around, pushing out his finely shaped chin and his hooked nose as if he were listening for something. He could still hear the motor car climbing on to the Heath. Below was the yellow, foul-smelling glare of the Hampstead tube station. On the right the trees.

The girl, with her alert, pink-and-white face, looked at him sharply, inquisitively. She had an odd, nymphlike inquisitiveness, sometimes like a bird, sometimes a squirrel, sometimes a rabbit; never quite like a woman. At last he stood still, as if he would go no farther. There was a curious, baffled grin on his smooth, cream-colored face.

"James," he said loudly to her, leaning toward her ear. "Do you hear somebody *laughing?*"

"Laughing?" she retorted quickly. "Who's laughing?"

"I don't know. *Somebody!*" he shouted, showing his teeth at her in a very odd way.

"No, I hear nobody," she announced.

"But it's most *extraordinary!*" he cried, his voice slurring up and down. "Put on your machine."

"Put it on?" she retorted. "What for?"

"To see if you can *hear* it," he cried.

"Hear what?"

"The *laughing*. Somebody laughing. It's most *extraordinary.*"

She gave her odd little chuckle and handed him her machine. He held it while she opened the lid and attached the wires, putting the band over her head and the receivers at her ears, like a wireless operator. Crumbs of snow fell down the cold darkness. She switched on; little yellow lights in glass tubes shone in the machine. She was connected, she was listening. He stood with his head ducked, his hands shoved down in his overcoat pockets.

Suddenly he lifted his face and gave the weirdest, slightly neighing laugh, uncovering his strong, spaced teeth and arching his black brows, and watching her with queer, gleaming, goatlike eyes. She seemed a little dismayed.

"There!" he said. "Didn't you hear it?"

"I heard *you*!" she said, in a tone which conveyed that *that* was enough.

"But didn't you hear *it*?" he cried, unfurling his lips oddly again.

"No!" she said.

He looked at her vindictively, and stood again with ducked head. She remained erect, her fur hat in her hand, her fine bobbed hair banded with the machine band and catching crumbs of snow, her odd, bright-eyed, deaf nymph's face lifted with blank listening.

"There!" he cried, suddenly jerking up his gleaming face. "You mean to tell me you can't—" He was looking at her almost diabolically. But something else was too strong for him. His face wreathed with a startling, peculiar smile, seeming to gleam, and suddenly the most extraordinary laugh came bursting out of him, like an animal laughing. It was a strange, neighing sound, amazing in her ears. She was startled, and switched her machine quieter.

A large form loomed up: a tall, clean-shaven young policeman.

"A radio?" he asked laconically.

"No, it's my machine. I'm deaf!" said Miss James quickly and distinctly. She was not the daughter of a peer for nothing.

The man in the bowler hat lifted his face and glared at the fresh-faced young policeman with a peculiar white glare in his eyes.

"Look here!" he said distinctly. "Did you hear some one laughing?"

"Laughing! I hear you, sir."

"No, *not* me." He gave an impatient jerk of his arm, and lifted his face

again. His smooth, creamy face seemed to gleam, there were subtle curves of derisive triumph in all its lines. He was careful not to look directly at the young policeman. "The most extraordinary laughter I ever heard," he added, and the same touch of derisive exultation sounded in his tones.

The policeman looked down on him cogitatively.

"It's perfectly all right," said Miss James coolly. "He's not drunk. He just hears something that we don't hear."

"Drunk!" echoed the man in the bowler hat, in profoundly amused derision. "If I were merely drunk—" And off he went again in the wild, neighing, animal laughter, while his averted face seemed to flash.

At the sound of the laughter something roused in the blood of the girl and of the policeman. They stood nearer to one another, so that their sleeves touched and they looked wonderingly across at the man in the bowler hat. He lifted his black brows at them.

"Do you mean to say you heard nothing?" he asked.

"Only you," said Miss James.

"Only you, sir!" echoed the policeman.

"What was it like?" asked Miss James.

"Ask me to *describe* it!" retorted the young man, in extreme contempt. "It's the most marvelous sound in the world."

And truly he seemed wrapped up in a new mystery.

"Where does it come from?" asked Miss James, very practical.

"Apparently," he answered in contempt, "from over there." And he pointed to the trees and bushes inside the railings over the road.

"Well, let's go and see!" she said.

"I can carry my machine and go on listening."

The man seemed relieved to get rid of the burden. He shoved his hands in his pockets again and sloped off across

the road. The policeman, a queer look flickering on his fresh young face, put his hand round the girl's arm carefully and subtly, to help her. She did not lean at all on the support of the big hand, but she was interested, so she did not resent it. Having held herself all her life intensely aloof from physical contact, and never having let any man touch her, she now, with a certain nymphlike voluptuousness, allowed the large hand of the young policeman to support her as they followed the quick, wolflike figure of the other man across the road uphill. And she could feel the presence of the young policeman, through all the thickness of his dark-blue uniform, as something young and alert and bright.

When they came up to the man in the bowler hat, he was standing with his head ducked, his ears pricked, listening beside the iron rail inside which grew big, black holly trees tufted with snow, and old, ribbed, silent English elms.

The policeman and the girl stood waiting. She was peering into the bushes with the sharp eyes of a deaf nymph, deaf to the world's noises. The man in the bowler hat listened intensely. A lorry rolled downhill, making the earth tremble.

"There!" cried the girl, as the lorry rumbled darkly past. And she glanced round with flashing eyes at her policeman, her fresh, soft face gleaming with startled life. She glanced straight into the puzzled, amused eyes of the young policeman. He was just enjoying himself.

"Don't you see?" she said, rather impatiently.

"What is it, miss?" answered the policeman.

"I mustn't point," she said. "Look where I look."

And she looked away with brilliant eyes, into the dark holly bushes. She must see something, for she smiled faintly, with subtle satisfaction, and she

tossed her erect head in all the pride of vindication. The policeman looked at her instead of into the bushes. There was a certain brilliance of triumph and vindication in all the poise of her slim body.

"I always knew I should see him," she said triumphantly to herself.

"Whom do you see?" shouted the man in the bowler hat.

"Don't you see him, too?" she asked, turning round her soft, arch, nymphlike face anxiously. She was anxious for the little man to see.

"No, I see nothing. What do you see, James?" cried the man in the bowler hat, insisting.

"A man."

"Where?"

"There. Among the holly bushes."

"Is he there now?"

"No! He's gone."

"What sort of a man?"

"I don't know."

"What did he look like?"

"I can't tell you."

But at that instant the man in the bowler hat turned suddenly, and the arch, triumphant look flew to his face.

"Why, he must be *there*!" he cried, pointing up the grove. "Don't you hear him laughing? He must be behind those trees."

And his voice, with curious delight, broke into a laugh again, as he stood and stamped his feet on the snow, and danced to his own laughter, ducking his head. Then he turned away and ran swiftly up the avenue lined with old trees.

He slowed down as a door at the end of a garden path, white with untouched snow, suddenly opened, and a woman in a long-fringed black shawl stood in the light. She peered out into the night. Then she came down to the low garden gate. Crumbs of snow still fell. She had dark hair and a tall, dark comb.

"Did you knock at my door?" she asked of the man in the bowler hat.

"I? No!"

"Somebody knocked at my door."

"Did they? Are you sure? They can't have done. There are no foot-marks in the snow."

"Nor are there!" she said. "But somebody knocked and called something."

"That's very curious," said the man.

"Were you expecting some one?"

"No. Not exactly expecting any one. Except that one is always expecting Somebody, you know." In the dimness of the snow-lit night he could see her making big, dark eyes at him.

"Was it some one laughing?" he said.

"No. It was no one laughing, exactly. Some one knocked, and I ran to open, hoping as one always hopes, you know——"

"What?"

"Oh—that something wonderful is going to happen."

He was standing close to the low gate. She stood on the opposite side. Her hair was dark, her face seemed dusky, as she looked up at him with her dark, meaningful eyes.

"Did you wish some one would come?" he asked.

"Very much," she replied, in her plangent voice.

He bent down, unlatching the gate. As he did so the woman in the black shawl turned and, glancing over her shoulder, hurried back to the house, walking unevenly in the snow, on her high-heeled shoes. The man hurried after her, hastening like a hound to catch up.

Meanwhile the girl and the policeman had come up. The girl stood still when she saw the man in the bowler hat going up the garden walk after the woman in the black shawl with the fringe.

"Is he going in?" she asked quickly.

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" said the policeman.

"Does he know that woman?"

"I can't say. I should say he soon will," replied the policeman.

"But who is she?"

"I couldn't say who she is."

The two dark, confused figures entered the lighted doorway, then the door closed on them.

"He's gone," said the girl outside on the snow. She hastily began to pull off the band of her telephone receiver, and switched off her machine. The tubes of secret light disappeared, she packed up the little leather case. Then, pulling on her soft fur cap, she stood once more ready.

The slightly martial look which her long, dark-blue, military-seeming coat gave her was intensified, while the slightly anxious, bewildered look of her face had gone. She seemed to stretch herself, to stretch her limbs free. And the inert look had left her full, soft cheeks. Her cheeks were alive with the glimmer of pride and a new, dangerous surety.

She looked quickly at the tall young policeman. He was clean-shaven, fresh-faced, smiling oddly under his helmet, waiting in subtle patience a few yards away. She saw that he was a decent young man, one of the waiting sort.

The second of ancient fear was followed at once in her by a blithe, unaccustomed sense of power.

"Well!" she said. "I should say it's no use waiting." She spoke decisively.

"You don't have to wait for him, do you?" asked the policeman.

"Not at all. He's much better where he is." She laughed an odd, brief laugh. Then glancing over her shoulder, she set off down the hill, carrying her little case. Her feet felt light, her legs felt long and strong. She glanced over her shoulder again. The young policeman was following her, and she laughed to herself. Her limbs felt so lithe and so strong, if she wished she could easily run faster than he. If she wished, she could easily kill him, even with her hands.

So it seemed to her. But why kill him? He was a decent young fellow. She had in front of her eyes the dark face among the holly bushes, with the brilliant, mocking eyes. Her breast felt full of power, and her legs felt long and strong and wild. She was surprised herself at the sensation of triumph and of rosy anger. Her hands felt keen on her wrists. She who had always declared she had not a muscle in her body! Even now, it was not muscle, it was a sort of flame.

Suddenly it began to snow heavily, with fierce, frozen puffs of wind. The snow was small, in frozen grains, and hit sharp on her face. It seemed to whirl round her as if she herself were whirling in a cloud. But she did not mind. There was a flame in her, her limbs felt flamey and strong, amid the whirl.

And the whirling, snowy air seemed full of presences, full of strange, unheard noises. She was used to the sensation of noises taking place which she could not hear. This sensation became very strong. She felt something was happening in the wild air.

The London air was no longer heavy and clammy, saturated with ghosts of the unwilling dead. A new, clean tempest swept down from the pole, and there were noises.

Voices were calling. In spite of her deafness she could hear some one, several voices, calling and whistling, as if many people were hallooing through the air:

"He's come back! Aha! He's come back!"

There was a wild, whistling, jubilant sound of voices in the storm of snow. Then obscured lightning winked through the snow in the air.

"Is that thunder and lightning?" she asked of the young policeman, as she stood still, waiting for his form to emerge through the veil of whirling snow.

"Seems like it to me," he said.

And at that very moment the lightning blinked again, and the dark, laughing face was near her face, it almost touched her cheek.

She started back, but a flame of delight went over her.

"There!" she said. "Did you see that?"

"It lightened," said the policeman.

She was looking at him almost angrily. But then the clean, fresh animal look of his skin, and the tame-animal look in his frightened eyes amused her; she laughed her low, triumphant laugh. He was obviously afraid, like a frightened dog that sees something uncanny.

The storm suddenly whistled louder, more violently, and, with a strange noise like castanets, she seemed to hear voices clapping and crying:

"He is here! He's come back!"

She nodded her head gravely.

The policeman and she moved on side by side. She lived alone in a little stucco house in a side street down the hill. There was a church and a grove of trees, and then the little old row of houses. The wind blew fiercely, thick with snow. Now and again a taxi went by, with its lights showing weirdly. But the world seemed empty, uninhabited save by snow and voices.

As the girl and the policeman turned past the grove of trees near the church, a great whirl of wind and snow made them stand still, and in the wild confusion they heard a whirling of sharp, delighted voices, something like seagulls, crying:

"He's here! He's here!"

"Well, I'm jolly glad he's back," said the girl calmly.

"What's that?" said the nervous policeman, hovering near the girl.

The wind let them move forward. As they passed along the railings it seemed to them the doors of the church were open, and the windows were out, and

the snow and the voices were blowing in a wild career all through the church.

"How extraordinary that they left the church open!" said the girl.

The policeman stood still. He could not reply.

And as they stood they listened to the wind and the church full of whirling voices all calling confusedly.

"Now I hear the laughing," she said suddenly.

It came from the church: a sound of low, subtle, endless laughter, a strange, naked sound.

"Now I hear it!" she said.

But the policeman did not speak. He stood cowed, listening to the strange noises in the church.

The wind must have blown out one of the windows, for they could see the snow whirling in volleys through the black gap, and whirling inside the church like a dim light. There came a sudden crash, followed by a burst of chuckling, naked laughter. The snow seemed to make a queer light inside the building, like ghosts moving, big and tall.

There was more laughter, and a tearing sound. On the wind, pieces of paper, leaves of books, came whirling among the snow through the dark window. Then a white thing, soaring like a crazy bird, rose up on the wind as if it had wings, and lodged on a black tree outside, struggling. It was the altar cloth.

There came a bit of gay, trilling music. The wind was running over the organ pipes like Pan pipes, quickly up and down. Snatches of wild, gay, trilling music, and bursts of the naked, low laughter.

"Really!" said the girl. "This is most extraordinary. Do you hear the music and the people laughing?"

"Yes, I hear somebody on the organ!" said the policeman.

"And do you get the puff of warm wind? Smelling of spring. Almond blossom, that's what it is! A most mar-

velous scent of almond blossom. Isn't it an extraordinary thing!"

She went on triumphantly past the church, and came to the row of little old houses. She entered her own gate in the little railed entrance.

"Here I am!" she said finally. "I'm home now. Thank you very much for coming with me."

She looked at the young policeman. His whole body was white as a wall with snow, and in the vague light of the arc lamp from the street his face was humble and frightened.

"Can I come in and warm myself a bit?" he asked humbly. She knew it was fear rather than cold that froze him. He was in mortal fear.

"Well!" she said. "Stay down in the sitting room if you like. But don't come upstairs, because I am alone in the house. You can make up the fire in the sitting room, and you can go when you are warm."

She left him on the big, low couch before the fire, his face bluish and blank with fear. He rolled his blue eyes after her as she left the room. But she went up to her bedroom, and fastened her door.

In the morning she was in her studio upstairs in her little house, looking at her own paintings and laughing to herself. Her canaries were talking and shrilly whistling in the sunshine that followed the storm. The cold snow outside was still clean, and the white glare in the air gave the effect of much stronger sunshine than actually existed.

She was looking at her own paintings, and chuckling to herself over their comicalness. Suddenly they struck her as absolutely absurd. She quite enjoyed looking at them, they seemed to her so grotesque. Especially her self-portrait, with its nice brown hair and its slightly opened rabbit mouth and its baffled, uncertain rabbit eyes. She looked at the painted face and laughed in a long, rippling laugh, till the yellow canaries like

faded daffodils almost went mad in an effort to sing louder. The girl's long, rippling laugh sounded through the house uncannily.

The housekeeper, a rather sad-faced young woman of a superior sort—nearly all people in England are of the superior sort, superiority being an English ailment—came in with an inquiring and rather disapproving look.

"Did you call, Miss James?" she asked loudly.

"No. No, I didn't call. Don't shout, I can hear quite well," replied the girl.

The housekeeper looked at her again.

"You knew there was a young man in the sitting room?" she said.

"No. Really!" cried the girl. "What, the young policeman? I'd forgotten all about him. He came in in the storm to warm himself. Hasn't he gone?"

"No, Miss James."

"How extraordinary of him! What time is it? Quarter to nine! Why didn't he go when he was warm? I must go and see him, I suppose."

"He says he's lame," said the housekeeper censoriously and loudly.

"Lame! That's extraordinary. He certainly wasn't last night. But don't shout. I can hear quite well."

"Is Mr. Marchbanks coming in to breakfast, Miss James?" said the housekeeper, more and more censorious.

"I couldn't say. But I'll come down as soon as mine is ready. I'll be down in a minute, anyhow, to see the policeman. Extraordinary that he is still here."

She sat down before her window, in the sun, to think a while. She could see the snow outside, the bare, purplish trees. The air all seemed rare and different. Suddenly the world had become quite different, as if some skin or integument had broken, as if the old, moldering London sky had cracked and rolled back, like an old skin, shriveled, leaving an absolutely new blue heaven.

"It really is extraordinary!" she said

to herself. "I certainly saw that man's face. What a wonderful face it was! I shall never forget it. Such laughter! He laughs longest who laughs last. He certainly will have the last laugh. I like him for that: he will laugh last. Must be some one really extraordinary! How very nice to be the one to laugh last. He certainly will. What a wonderful being! I suppose I must call him a being. He's not a person exactly.

"But how wonderful of him to come back and alter all the world immediately! *Isn't* that extraordinary. I wonder if he'll have altered Marchbanks. Of course, Marchbanks never *saw* him. But he heard him. Wouldn't that do as well, I wonder! I *wonder*!"

She went off into a muse about Marchbanks. She and he were *such* friends. They had been friends like that for almost two years. Never lovers. Never that at all. But *friends*.

And after all, she had been in love with him: in her head. This seemed now so funny to her: that she had been, in her head, so much in love with him. After all, life was too absurd.

Because now she saw herself and him as such a funny pair. He so funnily taking life terribly seriously, especially his own life. And she so ridiculously *determined* to save him from himself. Oh, how absurd! *Determined* to save him from himself, and wildly in love with him in the effort. The determination to save him from himself!

Absurd! Absurd! Absurd! Since she had seen the man laughing among the holly bushes—*such* extraordinary, wonderful laughter—she had seen her own ridiculousness. Really, what fantastic silliness, saving a man from himself! Saving anybody. What fantastic silliness! How much more amusing and lively to let a man go to perdition in his own way. Perdition was more amusing than salvation anyhow, and a much better place for most men to go to.

She had never been in love with any

man, and only spuriously in love with Marchbanks. She saw it quite plainly now. After all, what nonsense it all was, this being-in-love business. Thank goodness she had never made the humiliating mistake.

No, the man among the holly bushes had made her see it all so plainly: the ridiculousness of being in love, the *infra dig* business of chasing a man or being chased by a man.

"Is love *really* so absurd and *infra dig*?" she said aloud to herself.

"Why of course!" came a deep, laughing voice.

She started round, but nobody was to be seen.

"I expect it's that man again!" she said to herself. "It really is remarkable, you know. I consider it's a remarkable thing that I never really wanted a man—*any* man. And there I am over thirty. It is curious. Whether it's something wrong with me, or right with me, I can't say. I don't know till I've proved it. But I believe, if that man kept on laughing, something would happen to me."

She smelt the curious smell of almond blossom in the room, and heard the distant laugh again.

"I do wonder why Marchbanks went with that woman last night. Whatever could he want of her?—or she him? So strange, as if they both had made up their minds to something! How extraordinarily puzzling life is! So messy, it all seems.

"Why does nobody ever laugh in life like that man. He *did* seem so wonderful. So scornful! And so proud! And so real! With those laughing, scornful, amazing eyes, just laughing and disappearing again. I can't imagine him chasing any woman, thank goodness. It's all so messy. My policeman would be messy if one would let him: like a dog. I do dislike dogs, really I do. And men do seem so doggy!"

But even while she mused, she began

to laugh again to herself with a long, low chuckle. How wonderful of that man to come and laugh like that and make the sky crack and shrivel like an old skin. Wasn't he wonderful! Wouldn't it be wonderful if he just touched her. Even touched her. She felt, if he touched her, she herself would emerge new and tender out of an old, hard skin. She was gazing abstractedly out of the window.

"There he comes, just now," she said abruptly. But she meant Marchbanks, not the laughing man.

There he came, his hands still shoved down in his overcoat pockets, his head still rather furtively ducked, in the bowler hat, and his legs still rather shambling. He came hurrying across the road, not looking up, deep in thought, no doubt. Thinking profoundly, with agonies of agitation, no doubt about his last night's experience. It made her laugh.

She, watching from the window above, burst into a long laugh, and the canaries went off their heads again.

He was in the hall below. His resonant voice was calling, rather imperiously:

"James! Are you coming down?"

"No," she called. "You come up."

He came up two at a time, as if his feet were a bit savage with the stairs for obstructing him.

In the doorway he stood staring at her with a vacant, sardonic look, his gray eyes moving with a queer light. And she looked back at him with a curious, rather haughty carelessness.

"Don't you want your breakfast?" she asked. It was his custom to come and take breakfast with her each morning.

"No," he answered loudly. "I went to a tea shop."

"Don't shout," she said. "I can hear you quite well."

He looked at her with mockery and a touch of malice.

"I believe you always could," he said, still loudly.

"Well, anyway, I can now, so you needn't shout," she replied.

And again his gray eyes, with the queer, grayish phosphorescent gleam in them, lingered malignantly on her face.

"Don't look at me," she said calmly. "I know all about everything."

He burst into a pouf of malicious laughter.

"Why, what's the matter!" he said curiously. "What have you been doing?"

"I don't quite know. Why? Are you going to call me to account?"

"Did you hear that laughing?"

"Oh, yes. And many more things. And saw things, too."

"Have you seen the paper?"

"No. Don't shout, I can hear."

"There's been a great storm, blew out the windows and doors of the church outside here, and pretty well wrecked the place."

"I saw it. A leaf of the church Bible blew right in my face—from the Book of Job." She gave a low laugh.

"But what else did you see?" he cried loudly.

"I saw *him*."

"Who?"

"Ah, that I can't say."

"But what was he like?"

"That I can't tell you. I don't really know."

"But you must know. Did your policeman see him, too?"

"No, I don't suppose he did. My policeman!" And she went off into a long ripple of laughter. "He is by no means mine. But I *must* go downstairs and see him."

"It's certainly made you very strange," Marchbanks said. "You've got no *soul*, you know."

"Oh, thank goodness for that!" she cried. "My policeman has one, I'm sure. *My policeman!*" And she went off again into a long peal of laughter,

the canaries pealing shrill accompaniment.

"What's the matter with you?" he said.

"Having no soul. I never had one really. It was always fobbed off on me. Soul was the only thing there was between you and me. Thank goodness it's gone. Haven't you lost yours? The one that seemed to worry you, like a decayed tooth?"

"But what are you *talking* about?" he cried.

"I don't know," she said. "It's all so extraordinary. But look here, I *must* go down and see my policeman. He's downstairs in the sitting room. You'd better come with me."

They went down together. The policeman, in his waistcoat and shirt sleeves, was lying on the sofa, with a very long face.

"Look here!" said Miss James to him. "Is it true you're lame?"

"It is true. That's why I'm here. I can't walk," said the fair-haired young man as tears came to his eyes.

"But how did it happen? You weren't lame last night," she said.

"I don't know how it happened—but when I woke up and tried to stand up, I couldn't do it." The tears ran down his distressed face.

"How very extraordinary!" she said. "What can we do about it?"

"Which foot is it?" asked Marchbanks. "Let us have a look at it."

"I don't like to," said the poor devil.

"You'd better," said Miss James.

He slowly pulled off his stocking, and showed his white left foot curiously clubbed, like the weird paw of some animal. When he looked at it himself, he sobbed.

And as he sobbed, the girl heard again the low, exulting laughter. But she paid no heed to it, gazing curiously at the weeping young policeman.

"Does it hurt?" she asked.

"It does if I try to walk on it," wept the young man.

"I'll tell you what," she said. "We'll telephone for a doctor, and he can take you home in a taxi."

The young fellow shamefacedly wiped his eyes.

"But have you no idea how it happened?" asked Marchbanks anxiously.

"I haven't myself," said the young fellow.

At that moment the girl heard the low, eternal laugh right in her ear. She started, but could see nothing.

She started round again as Marchbanks gave a strange, yelping cry, like a shot animal. His white face was drawn, distorted in a curious grin, that was chiefly agony but partly wild recognition. He was staring with fixed eyes at some-

thing. And in the rolling agony of his eyes was the horrible grin of a man who realizes he has made a final, and this time fatal, fool of himself.

"Why," he yelped in a high voice, "I knew it was he!" And with a queer, shuddering laugh he pitched forward on the carpet and lay writhing for a moment on the floor. Then he lay still, in a weird, distorted position, like a man struck by lightning.

Miss James stared with round, staring brown eyes.

"Is he dead?" she asked quickly.

The young policeman was trembling so that he could hardly speak. She could hear his teeth chattering.

"Seems like it," he stammered.

There was a faint smell of almond blossom in the air.



MAN shall be trained for war, and woman for the recreation of the warrior. All else is folly.—*Friedrich Nietzsche.*



It is one of the signs of a healthy nature to retain for many years the freshness of the heart which makes one liable to fall in love, as a healthy palate retains the natural early taste for delicious fruits.—*P. G. Hamerton.*



It is the notion of lovers, that all their happiness is to come after marriage, and that the anxieties, disappointments, and delays, which a variety of fortuitous circumstances may occasion to protract their marriage, are most unbearable tortures; when, in fact, it too often happens that courtship has seen the only moments of their mutual felicity.—*Thomas Gulliland.*



MADAME approached me on the road, took my arm, and drew me a little away from the others. Then, suddenly, she said to me in a tone of voice I had never before heard: "Do not think that I am a wicked woman. My George knows that I am a good mother." We walked together for a moment in silence. She lifted her eyes, and I saw that she was crying.

"Madame," I said to her, "look at this earth which has been burned and cracked for five long months by fiery heat. A little white lily has sprung from it." And I pointed with my cane to the frail stem, tipped by a double blossom. "Your heart," I said, "however arid it be, bears also its white lily; and for that reason I do not believe that you are, as you say, a wicked woman."

—*Anatole France.*

Mr. Pickwick's Christmas Eve

By CHARLES DICKENS

THE family were assembled in the large kitchen, according to the annual custom on Christmas Eve observed by old Wardle's forefathers from time immemorial.

From the center of the ceiling of this kitchen, old Wardle had just suspended, with his own hands, a huge branch of mistletoe, and this same branch of mistletoe instantaneously gave rise to a scene of general and most delightful struggling and confusion; in the midst of which Mr. Pickwick, with a gallantry that would have done honor to a descendant of Lady Tollinglower herself, took the old lady by the hand, led her beneath the mystic branch, and saluted her in all courtesy and decorum. The old lady submitted to this piece of practical politeness with all the dignity which befitted so important and serious a solemnity, but the younger ladies, not being so thoroughly imbued with a superstitious veneration for the custom, or imagining that the value of a salute is very much enhanced if it cost a little trouble to obtain it, screamed and struggled, and ran into corners, and threatened and remonstrated, and did everything but leave the room, until some of the less adventurous gentlemen were on the point of desisting, when they all at once found it useless to resist any longer, and submitted to be kissed with a good grace.

Mr. Winkle kissed the young lady with the black eyes, and Mr. Snodgrass kissed Emily, and Mr. Weller, not being particular about the form of being under the mistletoe, kissed Emma and the other female servants, just as he caught them. As to the poor relations, they kissed everybody, not even excepting the plainer portion of the young lady visitors, who, in their excessive confusion, ran right under the mistletoe, as soon as it was hung up, without knowing it.

Now the screaming had subsided, and faces were in a glow, and curls in a tangle, and Mr. Pickwick, after kissing the old lady as before mentioned, was standing under the mistletoe, looking with a very pleased countenance on all that was passing around him, when the young lady with the black eyes, after a little whispering with the other young ladies, made a sudden dart forward, and putting her arm round Mr. Pickwick's neck, saluted him affectionately on the left cheek; and before Mr. Pickwick distinctly knew what was the matter, he was surrounded by the whole body, and kissed by every one of them.

It was a pleasant thing to see Mr. Pickwick in the center of the group, now pulled this way, and then that, and first kissed on the chin and then on the nose, and then on the spectacles, and to hear the peals of laughter which were raised on every side; but it was a still more pleasant thing to see Mr. Pickwick, blinded shortly afterwards with a silk handkerchief, falling up against the wall, and scrambling into corners, and going through all the mysteries of blindman's buff, with the utmost relish for the game, until at last he caught one of the poor relations, and then had to evade the blindman himself, which he did with a nimbleness and agility that elicited the admiration and applause of all beholders.

When they were all tired, they sat down by a huge fire of blazing logs, to a substantial supper, and a mighty bowl of wassail, something smaller than an ordinary wash-house copper, in which the hot apples were hissing and bubbling with a rich look and a jolly sound that was perfectly irresistible.

"This," said Mr. Pickwick, looking round him, "this is, indeed, comfort."

by
Charles Agnew MacLean
Author of *"The Mainspring"*



The
Cabochon Emeralds

IT was one of those New York days when the wind seems to be blowing from every direction at once—a spiteful wind, a teasing wind, a cruel, brutal wind blowing up and down Fifth Avenue and across the side streets, whirling little wisps of dry snow into tiny sandstorms, building up little drifts across doorways. It had tried to be a real snowstorm and failed. Now it was just a bleak, mean gale.

But one pair of footprints marked the little drift across the doorway of Charles Duval. The shop lay just a little off Fifth Avenue, but even in the holidays it was never crowded. As a dealer in objects of art, museum pieces with a history behind them, odd and bizarre jewels with romance and mystery winking at you out of their depths, Mr. Duval is distinguished. If you buy a present for a girl at Duval's you will certainly have to pay a great deal

for it, but you will also have the assurance that there is nothing else like it in town—or anywhere else, for the matter of that.

The regular clients of Mr. Duval are entertained upstairs. The ordinary public, the passers-by who drift into the quietly elegant little shop, are received below by a young man as quiet and elegant as the shop itself.

On this afternoon the young man was idle. There was nothing for him to do but polish his finger nails, rearrange his cravat, and smooth his glossy hair. Upstairs, Mr. Duval himself was doing the business for the establishment.

The room in which he and his customer sat was finely paneled in oak. Over an open wood fire was a Grinling Gibbons mantelpiece. Two more or less authentic Gainsboroughs and a Romney broke the mellow amber of the walls. A carved screen masked the

safe. An ancient and beautiful refectory table, half covered with a scarf of red, Genoese velvet, served as a counter on which Mr. Duval might display his treasures.

The only false note in the harmony of this dim-lit room was an early edition of an evening paper whose glaring, black headlines screamed at one from the armchair where it had been carelessly thrown. Its presence there annoyed Mr. Duval; indeed, it seemed to alarm him, for as soon as his eyes fell on it, he grasped it with a muttered exclamation of alarm and thrust it hurriedly beneath a pile of cushions.

Mr. Duval, like one of his own jewels, was suitably set. He matched the room. His spats were of the same soft fawn as his waistcoat, his morning coat fitted him beautifully. His eyes were the eyes of an art connoisseur and his complexion that of an English butler of the highest rank and properly seasoned. His nose was slightly predatory, but the silk handkerchief with which he dusted his hands was the very refinement of gentility.

"Horrid things, these sensational papers," he said with a polite shudder. "You don't ever read them, do you, Mr. Chesterfield?"

There was almost a tremor in Duval's voice, and young Mr. Chesterfield, whose eyes had been fixed on a jeweled clasp on the table, glanced up at him in mild surprise. He was a tall, well-built young man, with an intelligent, good-humored face, and an agreeable and friendly air of carelessness. He might have been thirty, but the only lines in his face were those left there by the practice of athletic sports in the open air and the habit of easy and kindly laughter, friendly little wrinkles at the corners of the eyes and deeper lines about the mouth. His dress, his voice, the unconscious ease of his attitude all proclaimed him as one whom Fortune has made a pet of, protecting him from

worry and annoyance, from unseemly eagerness of passion or struggle, showing him the world through her rosiest of spectacles.

"I hardly ever read them," he said, "except the sporting pages and some of the funny stuff—and some of it isn't very funny. But about these emeralds—you are sure this thing is an original?"

Mr. Duval tenderly raised the Russian-leather case in his hands. He became impressive.

"I give you," he said, "the written guarantee of Charles Duval & Brothers, of London, Paris, and New York, that this belt buckle, consisting of cabochon emeralds set in gold, was originally the property of a Russian grand duke who, two generations ago, presented it to a member of a distinguished American family. A representative of the family offers it for sale, but wishes, for personal reasons, that his name remain a secret. The gentleman from Tiffany's who called at your request pronounced it a genuine antique."

"I know," said Chesterfield, "but I'd like to have the pedigree with it. If it has a story, I'd like it now."

"The story will be in your possession within a few days." Mr. Duval laid the case back on the table and dusted off his hands once more.

The young man rose and bent over the table, looking down at the pale-gold setting and gleaming, provocative stones. As the fire crackled, sullen, green flames stirred in their depths. He knew he was extravagant, and yet he could afford it. It is pleasant to be gracious and princely and to bestow happiness.

In a fashion peculiarly elegant, Mr. Duval cleared his throat.

"You will not, I hope, think it an impertinence," he said, "if I suggest that perhaps you intend making this present to the young lady whom you hope to marry."

"Not at all," said Chesterfield with a sort of absent-minded formality, "not at all."

"In that case it might interest you to know that the young lady has seen the buckle."

"Oh, Pauline saw it, did she?" Chesterfield looked up with a flicker of interest.

"Miss Dupuy and her mother, Mrs. Dupuy, called the other day. They were looking for some little trinkets for Christmas presents. I was fortunate enough to please them with one or two trifles. I took the liberty of showing them this."

"Yes?" Chesterfield was still looking down at the stones.

"They are so fond of beautiful things, so appreciative. Miss Dupuy was enchanted with it. They both were. Miss Dupuy's taste is infallible—so sure, so discriminating. She said that this was exquisite. She had never seen anything like it before. She recognized its charm and value at once, instantaneously. She even went so far as to say that she might purchase it herself, if she had the means. It is a pity that people of their wonderful social position and taste have not the means of giving expression to it in the fullest possible way."

"All right," said Chesterfield. "I'll take it."

"You understand that the condition of sale at this price is immediate payment."

"If you have a blank check and a pen—" said Chesterfield.

Mr. Duval had a book of blank checks, an antique-looking bottle of ink and several quill pens, also a box of sand. There was nothing so crude and modern as blotting paper in his place. Like a benevolent Beau Brummel he bowed and rubbed his hands while the name Preston Chesterfield was affixed to a check calling for payment of a sum of money that would have seemed a

king's, if not an emperor's, ransom to the monks who once had dined at the narrow table.

Mr. Duval hastened to clasp the hand that had signed the check.

"I must congratulate you on having made a wise purchase," he said. "You have shown excellent judgment. Only the pressing necessities of the family would have induced them to part with it at this price."

"I would like Miss Dupuy to get it to-morrow morning. She generally arises about eleven."

"She shall have it upon awakening. A beautiful Christmas gift! And now, if you will excuse me for a moment? Before you go I want to have my expert examine the settings. I want to assure you of everything before you leave."

Duval's exit from the room was reverential and impressive. He held the Russia-leather case as if it were some sacred chalice. Once out of sight of Mr. Chesterfield, his manner changed into something much more agile and less gentlemanly. He skipped down the stairs in a sort of stealthy race and addressed his assistant in whispered and incisive speech.

"Go to the bank as fast as God will let you," he hissed into the elegant young man's ear. "Get this check certified and have it deposited to my account. Then if everything is all right, come upstairs and say that the settings are in good order. Got that straight?"

The assistant seemed quite used to this hurried Mr. Duval whom the customers never saw. He was struggling with his overcoat before Duval had reached the foot of the stairs. His hand was on the doorknob before the instructions were completed.

"Hurry," said Duval. "He doesn't know what has happened on the Street. Why did you leave that paper lying there? I thought he had seen it at first."

Uttering these and other remarks in a hoarse whisper, he pushed his man through the door and shut it after him. Being not quite as young as he sometimes felt, Mr. Duval waited a moment for his breathing to become more regular before he attempted the stairs. He was his genteel and imposing self again when he confronted Mr. Chesterfield with an invitation to join him in a glass of Napoleon brandy as befitting the day and the occasion. An authentic bottle was discovered among the Etruscan vases, Tanagra figurines, and other treasures in the big safe. Antique, crystal liqueur glasses accompanied the long-necked bottle.

The odors of Pedro Murias and the attar of autumn vineyards had faintly scented the room when the assistant returned with his report. The settings had been carefully examined and found perfect. Everything was in order.

A second congratulation of Mr. Chesterfield on his felicitous purchase was an imposing ceremony. The business of helping him into his coat, in which the young man from downstairs assisted, seemed almost in the nature of a solemn and sacramental investiture. Chesterfield found himself out on the wind-blown street, permeated with a vague consciousness of well doing and a very distinct sensation of physical glow and well-being.

In spite of the weather he would walk up the Avenue and call on his intended before dinner. What if the wind did slap you in the face, it was a sturdy, bracing wind. The stores with their dark-green window wreaths looked awfully jolly. It was nice to think that it was Christmas with everybody happy.

Two or three blocks north he bumped into Tommy Breck, southbound and in a hurry. Inasmuch as two short hours ago he had been playing squash with this young man and fully expected to see him again that evening, the natural thing would have been to pass him by

with a casual nod. Mr. Breck was of a different mind. He seized Chesterfield's arm and hand with affection. His face took on an expression of gravest concern.

"I'm awfully sorry, old man," he said, "awfully sorry. But I can't wait now. You must call me up after the holidays."

He was off before Chesterfield could ask him what it was he was sorry for or why he should call him up. The curiosity he left behind him carried with it a vague impression of uneasiness. Two or three chance acquaintances greeted him farther on, and it seemed as if their manner were out of keeping with the Christmas spirit. Passing the Metropolitan Club, he noticed old Mr. van Buskirk in the window. There was nothing unusual in that. What was strange was that Mr. van Buskirk seemed to be pointing him out sadly to another aged financier.

Some fifteen years ago Chesterfield had been summoned from the football field at Exeter to hear the news of his father's death. That fall day had returned somehow. The harsh air, the gray sky, the grave and commiserating faces were back again. The sensation of physical comfort, the easy self-satisfaction were fading and something dark and heavy loomed up beneath them. So it could not be said that he was entirely unprepared when he was ushered into the drawing-room of the Dupuy home.

Miss Dupuy and her mother were there, having the air of expecting him, also Melville Cram, a lawyer, who, though young, gave evidence in his manner that he was headed for the bench. The room ordinarily so pleasant in a formal way, gave a first impression of extreme disorder. A second glance showed that this disorder was due entirely to a litter of evening papers which were scattered everywhere, on chairs, on tables, and even

on the floor. Miss Dupuy held in her right hand a lace handkerchief with which she dabbed at her eyes. Her left was occupied with a lip stick and vanity case. Her dress had a general air of elegant disorder and her eyes were pathetic and reproachful. Mrs. Dupuy was as correctly turned out as ever, but her face had the expression usually seen at funerals. Mr. Cram, who, although little older than Chesterfield, was already growing bald in front, looked a little balder and more judicial than usual. He was unbelievably stern and sorrowful.

They all stood facing Chesterfield, searching him with reproachful eyes, a trio such as one might see in the third act of a fashionable play. Cram was the first to speak.

"I'm sorry for this, Preston, my boy," he said, "very sorry."

In a dazed fashion, Chesterfield shook hands and bowed to the ladies.

"Sorry for what?" he said. "What is it?"

"Oh, Preston, how *could* you do it?" said Miss Dupuy. She was a beautiful girl in a cold, blond, statuesque way, and she looked now like a great emotional actress in one of her most pathetic moments.

"Do what?" said Chesterfield.

"And why did you not tell us what you were doing?" said Mrs. Dupuy. She sank into an armchair as she spoke.

"Tell you what?" said Chesterfield. "What was I doing?"

"Pull yourself together, my boy, and don't talk like a parrot," said Cram. "There's no use trying to make a secret of it. It's all in the papers."

"What's all in the papers?"

"Is it possible you have not seen it? Here!" Cram held out one of the journals with which the room was littered.

Chesterfield stared at it stupidly. The headline was simple enough.

Whatever tragedy lay behind it was hidden in a cipher. In letters an inch high, running across the smudgy page, he read:

AMALGAMATED MOTORS HITS SIX HUNDRED

For a moment the room spun about him so fast that the printed letters refused to cohere into words. He was trying to read the news of a Wall Street sensation in which now, for the first time, he realized that he was acutely concerned. He had played the part of the proud prince, careless, generous, and trusting. Business he had left to others.

The letters began to steady themselves and arrange themselves into words. The words were marshaled into phrases, sentences, paragraphs. Other headings came out of the blur: "Bryan Determined to Squeeze the Shorts." "Bryan defies Stock Exchange Governors." "Sharpe, Martin & Co. Heavily Involved." "Stock Exchange Closed."

Sharpe, Martin & Co. was Chesterfield's firm. His money was behind them. He remembered something Tommy Martin had said to him about a raid on Amalgamated Motors only a week ago. Since then he had been playing squash and going to dances. On the same day he had won the squash championship at the club and lost a fortune. To say what he was thinking is impossible; he was thinking so many things at once. Mrs. Dupuy handed him another paper. Across its front, in even larger letters, ran the legend

CHESTERFIELD MILLIONS INVOLVED

He could hear Mrs. Dupuy's voice coming as from a great distance.

"This has been a terrible shock to me," it said. "I would not have understood what it all meant, had not Mr. Cram been so kind as to explain it all.

You have been gambling, Preston, and this is what has come of it."

Chesterfield carefully folded the papers and handed them to Cram. He knew exactly what had happened, for with all his carelessness he was no fool at business or anything else. It was not so spectacular as an earthquake, but quite as effective. To read of such things happening to others conveys a pleasant excitement and adds an interest to life. To have it happen to oneself is taking part in the last days of Pompeii or going over Niagara in a barrel.

A momentary silence was broken only by an occasional sniff from Miss Dupuy. Chesterfield's first feeling that the earth had collapsed beneath him gave place to an assurance of personal guilt. The three faces all accused him. Other feelings began to rise up through the welter in his breast. Pauline's sniffs and sobs annoyed him. He was a little angry at the attitude of his three friends.

"Well," he said, "I'm badly burned, that's all."

"All!" said Miss Dupuy through her handkerchief. "Mother, I can't stand this."

"All!" said Mrs. Dupuy. "Preston, do you realize what you have done to my girl?"

At present Chesterfield was a little too busy realizing what he had done to himself to think of others. He remembered the size of the check he had just signed for Pauline's Christmas gift. A faint smile touched the corners of his good-natured mouth and brought a new expression into his kindly eyes. Cram, who as a lawyer was good at reading faces, noticed it.

"This is no time for levity," he said.

Cram's heavy, judicial air was largely assumed and Chesterfield knew it. Also, he knew that Cram was a social climber as well as a rising young lawyer. He had noticed his attentions to Pauline with amused tolerance. Good-

natured and well-mannered people often see much more than they appear to. Anyway, his marriage to Pauline was a settled family matter, a wooing and betrothal as passionless, as formal, as decorous and ceremonial as though they had been members of the old régime in France.

At present, however, the airs Cram was giving himself were irritating. Chesterfield turned upon him as if he had been stung.

"What have you got to do with this?" he asked.

"I am a friend of Mrs. Dupuy and her daughter—Pauline," said Cram with slight embarrassment.

Chesterfield looked at him and Cram read in his face a chronicle of the true regard in which he had been held all these years. It was humiliating. Apparently Chesterfield liked nothing about him. His hair, his clothes, his shoes, his eyes, his soul were all in evident contempt. It is only the naturally polite man who can be thoroughly offensive when he chooses. Cram moved uneasily and tried to assert himself.

"Preston," he said, "I don't like the attitude you take."

"What have you to do with my attitude?"

"As a friend of Pauline's——"

"That gives you no right to lecture me just because I have made a miscue."

"A miscue!" said Mrs. Dupuy. "That is what he calls it."

Cram was a little encouraged by Mrs. Dupuy's support. She was a formidable personality.

"Your attitude is flippant," said Cram, "and your carelessness is criminal."

"I shall be glad to talk to Mrs. Dupuy and Miss Dupuy about my misfortune; but as far as I'm concerned, you don't exist."

"Preston," said Miss Dupuy, looking up from her little mirror, "please try

to remember that you are a gentleman."

"Pauline," said Chesterfield, "please try to persuade your friend that I don't want to talk to him."

Chesterfield at that moment, without knowing it, talked and looked like his grandfather. Underneath the good-natured personality there was something both polite and truculent that none of them had ever seen before. Pauline felt as though she had been doused with ice water. She was not used to it. It took her breath away. She appealed gaspingly to Cram.

"Please take me out, Melville. I can't stand this," she said.

The use of Cram's Christian name, the appeal that her expressive eyes made to the lawyer, had a correspondingly chilly effect on Chesterfield. He watched them out of the room in silence, Pauline clinging to the lawyer's arm and looking like the Muse of Tragedy.

"Now, Preston," said Mrs. Dupuy, "please sit down and try to calm yourself. I want to have a serious talk with you."

"I am at your service."

There was something in his tone that disturbed her. She could not say that it was rude. She could not have put her feelings into words. What was really the matter was that Chesterfield was no longer in awe of her. It was a new and unpleasant experience. She had been accustomed to have people in awe of her for so long, especially Chesterfield, whom she had hoped to hand over to her daughter in a proper state of submission. She could make him uncomfortable by talking to him seriously and slowly. She could make him still more uncomfortable by saying nothing at all, while he in a good-humored fashion strove to please and placate. She had enjoyed the exercise of both these powers—but now her pleasure was gone. She knew that noth-

ing she could say would make Chesterfield uncomfortable, and were she as silent as the sphinx, it would make no difference. We all hate to have power pass away from us.

"Oh, Preston," she said, "I feel so upset!"

"I am sorry," said Chesterfield.

"It is not the loss of the money," said Mrs. Dupuy after a long pause which she saw had no effect on the aspect of the young man before her. "That is a mere trifle." She waved her hand in a gesture suggesting something like a puff of eiderdown.

"Of course," said Chesterfield. She glanced at him to see if his meaning was sarcastic, but his face told nothing, which was worse. She determined to play her last card at once.

"The question is whether you are the sort of man to whom I can trust the happiness of my daughter," she said. "Pauline is so sensitive."

"You know me," said Chesterfield. "You should know."

"I am in serious doubt," she said.

"Perhaps Pauline knows," Chesterfield seemed to view the matter as a disinterested outsider.

"Pauline is such a dear girl! She tries to keep it from me, but I know she has been unhappy lately."

"If you wish to break the engagement, and Pauline wishes it, all I can say is that I am sorry."

"You grew up together as children and your marriage was an understood thing. But this recklessness and carelessness of yours is too much. My girl's life happiness is at stake. The question is—can you make her happy?"

"I used to think so, but just at present I have serious doubts."

"Mr. Cram was just saying before you came in—"

"Please spare me any reference to Mr. Cram," said Chesterfield, rising. "I think I understand you. The engage-

ment is broken. I have only to wish you and your daughter a happy holiday season."

Pique, disappointment, resentment—a dozen unaccustomed and bitter emotions were warring within the young man. The result was a totally different person from his normal self. Mrs. Dupuy was stunned. Before she had marshaled her thoughts for her next speech she was looking out on the street where the snow had started to fall again.

She could see Chesterfield as he dashed down the steps. Her eyes followed his tall figure as he strode off through the gathering dusk. Never before had he walked with that aggressive swing to his shoulders and with his hands thrust down into the pockets of his overcoat in that fashion. His very back looked hard and unfamiliar. Perhaps he was not a gentleman, after all. She had liked him a little, as much as she could like any one outside of the incomparable Pauline. What she had looked forward to as a painful interview for Chesterfield, and a not altogether unpleasant one for herself, had ended almost before it had commenced.

She wondered now if she had been wise in breaking the engagement. Yes, on the whole she thought she was. The Chesterfield fortune might be entirely swept away.

And then there was Melville Cram. She knew that Pauline liked him better than she did Chesterfield, although nine people out of ten would have considered Chesterfield the much more attractive man. There was something about Melville's energy, ambition, and subtlety that made an appeal to Pauline.

Miss Dupuy was the most dignified and circumspect girl in town. For years mothers had pointed her out to their daughters as the model for the fashionable, yet properly brought up, young lady. Her mother, however, had always understood her.

II.

The restaurant of Leon Fleuret is situated pleasantly on a side street. It is one of those admirable establishments which, starting modestly as confectionery and tea shops, become restaurants at once quiet and fashionable, through the sheer merit of cookery and service. It is an excellent place to take a girl. It is not the place for parties.

Without, a large brass-bound commissionaire stands ready to open the door. Within, is a beautifully proportioned room in white and gray with plenty of mirrors after the French fashion. Leon is always there in person, and he knows the majority of his guests by name.

It was here that Chesterfield found himself at about a quarter past seven. He wanted to meet no one he knew and Fleuret's would be comparatively deserted on Christmas Eve. He had broken his dinner engagement and spent a useless half hour trying to get his brokers on the phone. It was too late to do anything. Everything was closed. He was quite helpless, and his case hopeless.

Unlike the traditional young man who is ruined in fortune and bereft in love, he made no effort to become dissipated. A single Scotch and soda while dressing for dinner was his modest concession to the conventions of his circumstances. He had summoned the small, closed car that he drove himself and was about to leave for Fleuret's when he remembered the cabochon emeralds. He knew Duval well enough not to expect his money back. At the same time it did not seem quite the thing under present conditions to send them to Pauline. By good luck he caught Duval on the telephone at seven. That gentleman sometimes stayed late with his treasures of art and his Napoleon brandy. Chesterfield ordered the emeralds sent to his own home and agreed to have some one

there to receive them and receipt for them.

And so, his affairs for the day being concluded, he sat at a table in Fleuret's, engaged in the problem of what his dinner was to be. There were few others there that evening, only one or two couples scattered about the large room. The waiter had just handed him the card when some echo of commotion or conversation at the door caused him to look in that direction.

A girl, unattended, had just stepped into the room and was glancing about her in some confusion. Her graceful air of indecision, her dress, which was smart and simple at the same time, her bright eyes and glowing cheeks, made her an engaging figure to look at. Her blue eyes swept the room and came to rest on Chesterfield. She moved straight in his direction. At first he thought she had recognized some one behind him and dropped his eyes to his menu card. But no—she stopped at his table.

"Please pretend that you know me," she said in a low and agreeable voice. "*Please—it's important—please!*"

The voice and the intonation struck some reflex in Chesterfield that saved him the trouble of thought. He was on his feet at once, extending a courteous hand. A waiter drew out a chair for the young lady who was already unbuttoning her coat. She handed over her furs, and a moment later they were seated face to face.

"If you were ever in a hole in your life," she said, "think of it now. Pretend you know me. I'm Miss O'Brien. Pretend we've been here for some time. Look out now! Here he comes! Pretend you're talking to me."

The "he" referred to by Miss O'Brien was a tall man who had just entered. He was large without appearing so, with a beautiful pair of shoulders and a keen, hawk face. He moved

slowly down one side of the room, scanning all the couples.

"Don't look up," said Miss O'Brien. "Talk! Say something! If ever you were in trouble, think of it now and help me out."

"I am thinking of it," said Chesterfield. "I read somewhere that a good meal was a great help when you were blue. Let's order."

He ordered a clear soup, a filet of sole, a mousse of chicken, and Virginia ham, a salad and an ice.

"They don't often keep us waiting this way here," he said.

The large man had paused at the table. Beside him was Leon himself.

"I tell you the man you are looking for is not here," he said. "I cannot have my guests annoyed like this."

"I'm not looking for a man," said the newcomer. "It's a woman. Now, this lady here—"

"Is a friend of Mr. Chesterfield's. Surely you have heard of Mr. Chesterfield."

Chesterfield looked up, apparently noticing the tall man for the first time. His companion was arranging her gloves in a preoccupied and negligent fashion.

"This man is a detective," said Leon. "He is looking for some one."

"I see," said Chesterfield. He drew from the side pocket of his dinner coat an identification card case and presented it to the detective. One glance at the police card with the commissioner's signature at the bottom was enough.

"This lady came here with me," said Chesterfield.

"I'm sorry," said the detective. "She must have gone in somewhere else."

Miss O'Brien raised her head and looked him in the eye.

"I hope she gets away," she said. "Poor, hunted thing!"

The detective laughed.

"The ladies are always in favor of the under dog," he said. "Good night, miss."

"Now," said Chesterfield, when the door had closed on him, "what have you been doing?"

"It's a long story," said Miss O'Brien. "I've had the most terrible evening of my life. It won't be over till the day after to-morrow."

"What won't be over?"

"I'll tell you some day. In the meantime, I'm hungry. I recognized you the minute I came in the room. I'll pay for this party. You see I've seen you often, at the football games and here and there. Just let me stay here for three-quarters of an hour and then I'll go home. And I'll be grateful to you for the rest of my life."

Chesterfield needed no assurance from her that she was not the ordinary fugitive from justice. No man of his wealth and prominence could live long in New York without learning something about the different sorts of women in town and their wiles.

This was clearly an outdoor girl. In the matter of her personality she was almost too good to be true. She was so definitely well bred that there was no doubting her. She almost made him forget Pauline and Amalgamated Motors, which is saying a great deal. She was the sort of girl who laughed readily, at the right time, and never maliciously. She waved his cigarette case aside.

"I never learned to smoke," she said.

"Anyway, this mousse is too good to spoil.

"I'm a perfectly respectable person," she went on after a moment. "Though we haven't lived in the city in years. Of course I recognized you, Mr. Chesterfield. I knew from your face that you were clever enough to——"

"Thanks!"

"And easy-going enough to be taken in and imposed upon by any one who came along and asked a favor of you."

"And I'm being imposed upon now?"

"You are just being nice and helpful

to some one who is in danger this Christmas Eve."

"Serious danger?"

"As serious as you could imagine, and then some more! But it's only for the present. It will be all right in a day or so. It will all be undone again—at least, I hope it can—after to-morrow's over."

"You won't mind my saying that you make me curious."

"Well, then, I'll try and get your mind on something else. Do you know what the orchestra is playing?"

Chesterfield shook his head. He was aware of the music only as a pleasant accompaniment to an interesting experience.

"Now that is called 'Noel.' 'Noel,' you understand, being the French name for Christmas. It is my favorite Christmas carol. Now, this next one they are drifting into is the 'Cantique de Noel,' by Adam. It is a wonderful solo for a bass. They sing it, Christmas Eve, at the Madeleine. You should have heard Plançon sing it."

"I have. I remember it."

"You should have heard my father sing it. He had a wonderful voice. Now, this one they are coming to is the English one, 'God Rest you, Merry Gentlemen.' And after that they'll play 'Oh, Little Town of Bethlehem.' Do you see? Wasn't I right?"

"Perhaps you play or sing yourself?"

"Oh, just a little for amusement. Do you know I was fortunate in finding you here? It is an odd thing to find a gentleman like yourself dining alone on Christmas Eve."

"Is it?"

"Of course. Weren't you lonely?"

"Maybe so. I wasn't thinking whether I was lonely or not."

"That isn't a nice way to spend Christmas Eve."

"Don't you think that the Christmas good cheer becomes a bit of a farce sometimes?"

"No!" Miss O'Brien looked up from her salad and lent emphasis to her remarks with her eyes. "You might as well say that Christmas was a farce altogether. Just trying to be different from other people and not like the things other people do, doesn't appeal to me at all. I'm not cynical."

"Perhaps some people have things happen to them to make them cynical."

"Nothing that happens would make a man of any sense cynical."

"I don't lay claim to have any sense. But supposing you had a couple of very unpleasant Christmas gifts handed to you at once, wouldn't it dim your enthusiasm just a little?"

Miss O'Brien laid down her fork and eyed him disapprovingly.

"Mr. Chesterfield," she said, "that isn't fair. You are making me curious."

"Isn't fair! And you are making me more curious than I've ever been in my life."

"Why, I'm trying to keep you from being curious. Anyway, what does a man know about curiosity?"

"What do you know about men?"

"I have a brother."

Chesterfield leaned back in his chair and glanced around the room. The marvel of it all was that he felt perfectly at ease. The dinner was delicious. The music was not too loud. There was a genial warmth, not only in the air, but in some spirit that presided over the little table with its shaded candles and Santa Claus ices. Miss O'Brien had that strange faculty, given to many women, of making any place seem like home.

"A dollar," said Miss O'Brien, who had been figuring with a gold pencil on the edge of her menu card, "a dollar will be enough."

"Enough for what?"

"Enough for a tip for the waiter. Or, perhaps, as it is Christmas Eve, I might make it a dollar and a half."

"You might make it a dollar and a half!"

"Yes, this is my party, you know."

"I don't know. You are having dinner with me."

"Of course it will look better if you call the waiter and pay the bill. But after we get outside, I'll give this money to you. Or, here, take it now." She slid a neat little pile of silver and bills across the table. "Take it now while nobody's looking."

"I can't take it. I never heard of such a thing in my life."

"Oh, you are going to be stubborn! Please don't be stubborn." Miss O'Brien's face indicated that among her other accomplishments she numbered the ability to cry at will. A waiter appearing, Chesterfield settled the bill from his own pocketbook, holding the young lady's money in his other hand.

Miss O'Brien buttoned up her coat, pulled on her gloves, and resumed her furs.

"I must be going now," she said, "and thank you a thousand times! I will write you some day and explain the whole thing."

"I'm going to take you home," said Chesterfield, following her. "Besides, I can't allow you to leave this with me. It has been a great pleasure. You have helped to save the worst evening of my life."

"The worst evening of your life!" She shot a startled glance at him. "You don't know what bad evenings are. Wait till you hear what I have been through."

Outside, the wind had died away somewhat and it was snowing harder. She glanced up and down the white, deserted street.

"I expected some one back here in three-quarters of an hour," she said. "Something may have happened to him. Anything might happen to him!"

"I have absolutely nothing to do to-

night," said Chesterfield. "Here is my motor car. Let me take you home."

"Oh, I wouldn't think of it."

"You wouldn't trust yourself with me?"

"Nonsense! I mean that I don't want you to go to all that trouble. I've taken enough of your time already. I live in Westchester County, away up near Rye. It would be too far and you would not know the way."

"I know my way about Westchester after dark. Do step in."

The brass-bound commissionaire was holding the door open, and the little car looked unusually luxurious and comfortable. Miss O'Brien hesitated and was lost.

The engine purred like a sleepy cat, the car slid off as if it were on skates. Inside was a tempered warmth, soft cushions, the gleam of a small light on a dial, the chaste protection of plate-glass windows. Outside was a tunnel of light, boring into the snowflakes ahead, the soft crunch of snow beneath the cord tires, houses and lamp-posts and street crossings, all slipping behind them noiselessly and steadily.

As every one knows, there is something cozy and intimate about a closed car, especially in winter and in the evening; an atmosphere, too, of the old romance of coaching days, a feeling of having the whole, dark world shut out.

The spell of it was an anodyne for the hurt of a catastrophic day. Still more delightful was the presence of Chesterfield's companion. Unlike Pauline's, her attraction was not of the stunning, obvious sort, but a gently persuasive quality. Her voice brought back the cadences of dear, half-forgotten tunes, and yet her eyes held, mingled with their soft radiance, some quality of dizzy thrills.

As Pauline's fiancé, Chesterfield had been irreproachable in thought as well as action. It was a shock, but still rather pleasant, to discover that his

present elation of spirits came from a new-born sense of freedom! Now he could talk to any girl as long as he liked and nobody cared. It was thrilling. Of course he had been heartbroken, in a way, but then—

"I'm a nuisance," said Miss O'Brien, "making you all this trouble."

"You'll never be a nuisance to anybody."

"You are very kind, sir."

"I'm just telling the truth."

"Is that all?"

"Don't you suppose I like this?"

"Do you?"

"Certainly. Don't you?"

"Perhaps—a wee bit." Miss O'Brien gave herself a little ecstatic hug. "It's nice, gliding along like this. I ought to be perfectly miserable, but I don't think I am—not perfectly."

"I should be plunged in the depths of despair, but I'm happy."

"Why?"

"Why am I happy? Can't you imagine why, if you try hard?"

"I don't mean that—and you know it. I mean why should you be plunged in the depths of despair?"

"You tell me about yourself first."

"I can't tell you—not yet. In fact, I've talked a lot, as it is."

"What are you like when you are trying to keep a secret?"

"I've told you my name—and you are taking me home, and we've had dinner together. Isn't that traveling fast enough for people who have never been introduced?"

"Not half fast enough for me."

"Are you often in this mood?"

"This is positively the first time."

"And the last?"

"Oh, no. I hope to feel this way often."

"What is it like?"

"Oh, it's a sense of freedom—a feeling as if things were starting for the first time, a beautiful morning with a wonderful day ahead. I feel as if

springtime and Christmas were all rolled into one. Can't you understand?"

"I'm not quite sure."

"Have you never felt that way yourself?"

"Perhaps, sometimes."

"Now?"

"Maybe so."

Her voice was soft and had a faint tremor. He could see the rise and fall of her breast and the delicate outline of her profile. They were silent for a while.

The deserted uptown streets, the straggling houses and ghostly factories had dropped behind them. Virginal and white, the old Boston Post Road stretched before them. They had run through Larchmont when the girl laid her hand upon his arm and spoke again.

"The next turn to the right," she said, "then to the left over the hill. Then you'll see a break in the hedge. That's the driveway."

Wet snow fell on the hood from the high rose hedge as they swung off the road into an untracked driveway. A brick house, admirably designed and of considerable size, but dimly lit, opened out before them. Somewhere a dog barked and a second and a third joined the chorus. A door swung open and a vestibule light glowed suddenly, illuminating snow-covered stone steps and a porch with high, white pillars. An old and rather shabby butler opened the door of the machine.

"Has Mike come back yet?" said Miss O'Brien, springing out.

"No, ma'am."

"Nor Mr. Larry?"

"Not him, neither."

"Help this gentleman off with his things, then. I want to go in a moment, first."

She flew up the steps and disappeared down a wide hall. Moving at a more sedate pace, the butler led Chesterfield into a sort of smoking room and helped him off with his coat. The house was

old, rather fine, very comfortable, and just a little shabby. Presently Miss O'Brien's voice could be heard down the hall.

"Show Mr. Chesterfield in here," she said, "and then bring us some tea."

Chesterfield found Miss O'Brien awaiting him in a spacious apartment. On three sides were bookshelves and on the other an open fire. The furniture, evidently accumulated bit by bit, was of all periods. There were dozens of paintings of all sorts and sizes and several glazed cabinets. Miss O'Brien was bent over the fire arranging the logs.

Curiosity had for the moment blotted out every other emotion from Chesterfield's consciousness. The adventure was more and more strange. He had never seen a house like this. It was not the work of a decorator. It had been lived in expansively and it had grown. There were so many curious things to look at. It had something of the quality of a museum. Everything had atmosphere.

One big, glass-covered cabinet drew him like a magnet. He studied its contents while Miss O'Brien busied herself with the logs.

In it were miniatures, snuff boxes, old watches, vases, bits of jewelry. It reminded him somehow of Duval's collection. The thing, however, that made him draw a long breath, that held him speechless and motionless, was set forth alone on an upper shelf of the cabinet, the light from the old chandelier falling full upon it.

It nestled in a carefully opened Russia-leather case. It was startling and inimitable. There was nothing like it in the world. Its emerald eyes winked at him in a message so surprising and incomprehensible as to defy description.

The design was the same, the setting was the same, the tracings and odd scratches, the irregularly shaped stones

were the same. Even the signs of wear on the leather case were marks of identification. It was the cabochon emerald buckle he had purchased that afternoon from Duval.

III.

Amazement becomes an overpowering passion when it brings with it the element of inexplicability, when reason seems an utterly futile thing, when the imagination is stunned and paralyzed. There was a ringing in Chesterfield's ears. He could hear the emerald buckle speaking as plainly as though it addressed his ears and not his eyes.

"Behold me!" it said. "I am a miracle. There can be no other buckle so marvelously like me as this. Behold these stones! You have seen them often at Duval's. You know there can be no other gems so identically alike. Note my old, pale gold, the quaint idiosyncrasies of my workmanship. Surely it is I! And yet it cannot be I! I am at your house. I went there only an hour or so ago. I could not have arrived here. Yet here I am."

"Mr. Chesterfield," said Miss O'Brien, turning from her operations at the fire and seeing the young man's countenance, "what is the matter? You are so pale. Are you sick?"

"I am surprised."

"At what? What is the matter?" She was plainly concerned for him.

"I am surprised. There is something I cannot understand."

"Do sit down," said Miss O'Brien. She had left off her outer things and looked very girlish and friendly in a filmy blouse and dark skirt. Her hair was brown and wavy, shot with gleams of gold. She seemed as beautiful, as appealing, as inexplicable as the cabochon emeralds. They went together.

"You have not been very frank with me," said Chesterfield, "but I can't help

telling you what is bothering me. That emerald buckle in the cabinet there."

Miss O'Brien's hands went to her throat. The delicate flush ebbed from her face, leaving it transparently white with a few faint freckles showing. She swayed, thrust out a hand toward the chair beside her, sank into it. Chesterfield could hear the slow ticking of the clock in the corner and the crackle of the wood fire.

"Please forgive me," said Chesterfield at length. "I did not mean to startle you."

"The buckle!" said Miss O'Brien. "What about it?"

"This afternoon I bought an emerald belt buckle at Duval's. Either I am insane or it is there in that cabinet now."

A sort of blithe and valiant integrity that had made up part of her charm still shone in her eyes, although her face was a white mask. There was something inexpressibly touching about her distress. He took the tea things from the butler and poured her a cup. She drank it with a nod of thanks and laid the cup on the table.

"Do you mean to say that you bought that buckle this afternoon?" she said faintly.

"Either I did, or I am dreaming."

"Then that poor young man was going to you with it! And he may be hurt." She was biting her lower lip and her hands were clasped so that the knuckles showed white. He could see the fluttering rise and fall of her chest beneath the filmy blouse and a quick pulse throbbing in her throat.

"I don't know whom you mean," he said. "And, of course, I can't understand it all. But you mustn't distress yourself this way."

Some kindly instinct prompted him to rise, turn his back to her, and walk over to the fireplace. When he faced her again she had regained a certain measure of self-control.

"Sit down, please, Mr. Chesterfield,"

she said. "I must tell you the whole story."

Chesterfield waited patiently while she smoothed out her skirt and composed herself generally. In the cross lights of fire and chandelier she was prettier than ever.

"My father," she said, "was an Irishman—Lawrence O'Brien. He was once in the Senate, but he is dead these many years. My mother was a Peabody—a New England Peabody."

"I have heard of the family."

"My brother and I live here alone. Our nearest living relative is Uncle Horace Peabody."

"If he lives at Tuxedo, I know him."

"He does. He motors over here every Christmas morning to pay us a visit. He has been doing it all our lives. He'll be here to-morrow. I don't know what I'm going to do."

"Don't you like him?"

"I love him. He is the dearest man in the world. That belt buckle belonged to his family. He gave it to us. It is the first thing he looks at when he comes into the house. And if he comes here to-morrow and finds it gone——"

Miss O'Brien completed the sentence with a gesture of despair.

"But he won't find it gone," said Chesterfield cheerfully. "There it is."

Miss O'Brien sprang to the cabinet and opened it. She took out the fateful emeralds and extended them to Chesterfield. He had risen to his feet and was reaching out in a gesture of protest when footsteps sounded in the hall and the door shot open. Into the room stepped the tall detective who had invaded Fleuret's an hour or so ago. There was a look of angry determination in his eye, and he pushed aside the protesting butler with an angry gesture and stood surveying Chesterfield and the young lady who was in the evident act of handing over the buckle.

"Just give that to me," he said at length, "and get on your hat and coat."

Miss O'Brien retreated from him, holding the emeralds behind her back. The detective took a step after her and reached out as if to touch her. She looked like a frightened child confronting a giant.

"Look here," said Chesterfield, "there is a mistake here." He stepped between the two. "That buckle belongs to me."

The detective made the additional mistake of trying to brush him aside as he had the butler.

"Keep out of this," he said. "I'll put the bracelets on her—and you, too."

In extenuation of Chesterfield's conduct, it must be pleaded that he had spent a rather trying day. The present situation would have exasperated a pet rabbit. The touch of the officer's hand was the final circumstance, the spark that set off the gunpowder. It changed Chesterfield from a courteous and good-natured young man to a raging supermadman. He had a brain storm. It is a psychological fact that an even-tempered person, once thoroughly aroused, has less control over himself than one who loses his temper more or less habitually and knows how to handle it with practice. An Indian on his first debauch with liquor is much more dangerous than an habitual toper.

His first blow brought the central-office man down with a crash that shook the room.

Miss O'Brien and the butler were speechless—hypnotized by the spectacle before them. It was an altercation that would have interested Theodore Roosevelt or Jack London or Tarzan of the Apes. In fact, it would have interested any one. It was not brutal. It was too fast to be brutal. Like falling downstairs, it was absolutely engrossing while it lasted.

As an embodiment of whole-souled rage and fury, the fashionable Mr. Chesterfield was a heartening and edifying sight. His surrender to a stark and primitive emotion was so complete as

to be magnificent. No one could have had the heart to interfere with a spectacle such as he presented.

The tall detective played almost as worthy a part in the drama. He was hampered a little by his light overcoat, but, on the whole, it could not be said that he allowed it to cramp his style.

He arose with alacrity only to meet several punches, each of which elicited a heavy grunt. In apparent despair, he threw his long arms around the young man's neck and dragged him to his bosom. The room was silent save for a series of heavy thuds. Then, for a moment, the onlookers were rewarded by the sight of a young gentleman of the first fashion and an officer of the law, each engaged in a palpably sincere effort to throttle the other. This arresting tableau lasted but a fraction of a second. The clinch broke and for an infinitely minute period of time, no longer than a lightning flash, the tall man appeared to be engaged in an effort to push his face against Mr. Chesterfield's right fist and Mr. Chesterfield himself seemed to be doing his earnest best to aid and abet him in this enterprise. The scenes changed like those on a film run at triple speed.

A chair fell apart, and the detective was discovered in its ruins. He was up again, squaring off at Chesterfield in a sort of paralytic attitude. He was down on one knee. He was on his feet again, charging at his opponent like a wild boar. The only sounds were stamping feet, grunts and thuds, and the occasional crackle of some smashing article of furniture. Finally Chesterfield stood alone in the center of the room, with flushed face and rumpled hair, his collar torn open at the neck, and a long rip in the sleeve of his dinner coat. He was painfully breathless. At a little distance from him the large man was slowly rising to his feet. Something in his right hand gleamed in the firelight. It was a police revolver.

"I've got you covered," he said, "and if you make one more funny move, I'll drill a hole in you as sure as God made little apples! I hate to pull a gun, but I've had enough of this!"

"If you are a central-office man you can lay that gun down and call up Commissioner Blair. He knows me," said Chesterfield.

"Commissioner Blair is on his way up here. The whole department is stirred up over this robbery. It's the rawest thing has happened in years. I've got you two, and I've got the emeralds, and you won't get away this time. Hand over the buckle."

"That buckle belongs to me," said Chesterfield, dignified though still panting.

"Of course," said the detective with evident sarcasm, "and that's why I'm going to arrest you."

"I mean what I say," said Chesterfield. "I tell you it is my buckle. Try and get that through your head."

The young man's tone was so confident and masterful as to shake the composure of the other.

"It belongs to you, does it?" he said. "Where did you get it?"

"I bought it," said Chesterfield, breathing on the knuckles of his right hand and speaking with considerable irritation. "Where do you think I got it?"

The detective's eyes brightened with a new comprehension. His manner took on the soothing tone of one who humors a madman.

"Oh, you bought it?" he said. "I suppose you wanted to give it to some lady for a present."

"Exactly," said Chesterfield. "I can see why they put you on the detective force. You're a good guesser."

"I can guess well enough to tell you that you'll have to explain this at headquarters—and I've got a charge of assault."

"If Commissioner Blair is on his way

here, as you say, we can wait till he comes. Keep your gun on me if you want. I won't start anything. As for the assault, I'm sorry I lost my temper—but you started it. I hope you're not hurt. What's your name, officer?"

"Slade," said the detective. He turned to the girl. "Hand over that buckle," he said.

"Miss O'Brien," said Chesterfield, "please put the buckle in the cabinet where it belongs."

Slade, his weapon still pointed at Chesterfield, watched her as she silently obeyed. This was the strangest pair of thieves he had ever seen. Chesterfield's assured manner and confident air was beginning to have a little weight with him. The young man had every manifestation of being palpably genuine, and the girl looked too much like a lady for the detective's peace of mind. He knew the difference.

At any rate, there was the buckle, and there were the two who had brought it here, before him in the room. Whether or not the young man was insane, who the girl was—these were questions for the commissioner. They could not get away from him and he could afford to wait.

After the late tumult of conflict, the room was strangely silent. The butler moved quietly about, rearranging furniture and picking up pieces of the broken chair. The detective felt tenderly an abrasion on the bridge of his nose. In spite of the violent nature of the recent struggle, his hard face did not look much the worse for wear. The hand that held the revolver was steady. Mr. Chesterfield buttoned his collar, retied his black cravat, and looked quite respectable again. Miss O'Brien seemed on the verge of hysterical laughter. Finally she turned to the detective and broke the silence.

"Won't you sit down and have a cup of tea?" she said chokingly. "You look tired."

"You might as well sit down," said Chesterfield. "Even with that gun you can't run me out of here. And you are not going to arrest Miss O'Brien without shooting me first."

Slade studied him, his hard, intelligent face a picture of earnest cogitation.

"Who are you, anyway?" he said.

"You saw my card down at Fleuret's."

"Do you mean to say that you are the real Preston Chesterfield?"

"Certainly. And this young lady is Miss O'Brien, daughter of the late Senator Lawrence O'Brien."

The big man sat down and laid his weapon on the table.

"I don't believe you," he said. "But no crook could ever scrap the way you do."

"Do have a cup of tea," said Miss O'Brien.

"I never drink tea," said Mr. Slade. "One cup would get me nervous and keep me awake all night."

"It's whisky the officer wants," put in the butler.

"Whisky!" Mr. Slade turned a withering glance in his direction. "Do you think I'd ruin my condition with that stuff? Do you know who I am?"

"Yes," said the butler. "You're Tom Slade, the champion heavyweight of the force, and you are going to be tried out against a professional next week. I know you."

"Well, then, don't offer me whisky. If I had my way, there wouldn't be a drop of that poison in the world."

"It's lucky for you that Mr. Chesterfield isn't in the profession," said the butler slyly.

"That's all right," said Mr. Slade, who was recovering his composure and rearranging his attire. "I shouldn't have started anything rough. You run along and get me a glass of hot water."

Chesterfield leaned forward, studying the police officer, the beautiful swing

and slope of his shoulders, the muscular column of his neck, the well-set head, the long arms and the refinement of the lines of the torso, visible even beneath the overcoat, sloping in from broad shoulders to narrow hips. But a few moments ago this Hercules had fallen thrice before him. He felt the hair prickling up along the back of his neck. What pallid things were squash championships compared to this!

"Do I understand," he inquired, "that you are the Tom Slade who is to fight at the International Sporting Club in two weeks?"

Mr. Slade had seized the silver hot-water pitcher the butler had brought and was pouring himself a bumper of this invigorating beverage. He drank almost a pint before he answered.

"I'm the man," he said finally, a faint beading of perspiration showing on his forehead. "I've got an eight-hour detail on Wall Street, and I've been training at night. But it's hard to get right. This helps. No tea or coffee for mine. I need my sleep. You seem to be pretty fit yourself. I'll say that you've got a pretty fair right."

"It was an accident," said Chesterfield politely.

"I'll say that an accident that happens three times running like that, gets to be a habit. I'd like to ask a favor of you."

"Anything reasonable."

"If you're not under arrest, box with me a couple of times before the fight."

"I don't know how to box."

"I'll say that you know how to fight. What I want to find out is how you slip that right over. I don't want that to happen in the ring."

"Aren't you sorry you didn't listen to Mr. Chesterfield in the first place?" This from Miss O'Brien, who was quietly sipping tea.

Mr. Slade scratched his head. The atmosphere of the charming old room, with its dark paintings, its rugs, with

the log fire and the dull mahogany, above all, the invisible but no less potent aura of unconscious good breeding that Miss O'Brien carried with her, was acting upon him like some pleasant hypnotic gas. Without knowing how it happened, he was falling into a friendly conversation with two people he had expected to arrest.

"If you are the people you say you are," he said, "I am in a big hole, and I owe you an apology. I'm out of my depth here. My work is down on Wall Street. I passed Duval's just as the robbery occurred and got as good a description of the woman as I could. I thought I was making the biggest pinch of the year. But now it appears I made a fool of myself."

His thoughts were in the way of adjusting themselves to this new viewpoint, the air was clearing a little for him, when Miss O'Brien tossed him a mental hand grenade which sputtered for a moment, then went off in a shattering explosion that blew his new scheme of things into dust.

"You didn't make such a big mistake, after all," she said. "It was too bad you fought with Mr. Chesterfield, although it was most interesting. I am so glad that neither of you are hurt. But I might as well tell you now as later that those are the emeralds which were stolen from Mr. Duval's assistant, and that I brought them up here."

"What!" Mr. Slade almost spilled the glass of hot water he was raising to his lips. "What do you mean?"

"I mean just what I say."

"Then you're under arrest."

"Wait a minute," said Chesterfield. "Those emeralds belong to me. I have Duval's receipted bill for them in my pocketbook. Here it is. I paid a hundred and fifty thousand for them this afternoon. You can't arrest her for having them. I'm lending them to her."

Mr. Slade's jaw dropped as he studied the receipt.

"Who are you, anyway?" he said, turning to Miss O'Brien.

"My name is Patricia O'Brien. If you are down on the Street, perhaps you have heard of my brother Lawrence."

"Not Lawrence O'Brien, of W. F. Bryan & Co.?"

"Yes. And what I'm anxious about is what became of Mike."

"Who is Mike?"

"He's our chauffeur."

"Oh, the old fellow who was driving the limousine. They got him at the Twenty-third Street ferry. As I say, I only happened to be passing. There's a dozen men on this job, but I thought I was going to make the arrest. I went back to Fleuret's later and got a description of your car. I got another car and followed you up. When I was dead sure I had you right in this house, I telephoned down to headquarters. Commissioner Blair is coming up with Duval to get the jewels."

"I don't want to be inquisitive," said Chesterfield, "but you must remember that I don't even know how the buckle came here."

"You don't know how it came here!" said Slade. His face was beginning to show the influence that held Chesterfield, that nightmarish atmosphere of absolute impossibility and unreality that seemed to go with the room and the belt buckle. His eyes opened a little wider, his heavy hand slipped from the table and dropped to his side. Curiosity had reached the point where it was speechless. Words were no use. He stared at Chesterfield and shook his head feebly.

Miss O'Brien was rather pleased with the obvious helplessness of these two strong men. She enjoyed their bewilderment, but the mute appeal in Chesterfield's eye touched her heart. Hers was the strange, deliberate way of a woman telling a story. No brief gasp that gives the clew to the whole thing

in a sentence or two, but a slow, ordered unfolding.

"I told you, I think," she said, setting aside her teacup and addressing Chesterfield, "that Uncle Horace Peabody visits us every Christmas morning."

Chesterfield nodded. He did not dare to speak. He was afraid of interrupting her.

"No matter what the weather was, he always motored over. And if he were to come here and not find the buckle in the old place in the cabinet, he would be heartbroken. It is always the first thing he looks at. I wouldn't have him know about this for anything."

"But the buckle was——" began Slade. Chesterfield silenced him with a peremptory gesture.

"My brother is connected with a Wall Street concern," continued Miss O'Brien. "I am terribly worried about him. He was doing so nicely. And Uncle Horace told me that Mr. Bryan had spoken so kindly about him. And now we are ruined!"

"What has this got to do with it?" said Slade in a faint voice.

"About two weeks ago, Larry became interested in some Wall Street scheme. He didn't tell me any details, but he said it was a chance to make millions, and that it was absolutely safe and sure. He put all the money he had in it. He put in all I gave him. But he wasn't satisfied with that. He acted as if he had gone crazy. Finally, without my knowledge or consent, he tried to raise money on the buckle. He couldn't borrow any more, so he sold it to Mr. Duval for seventy-five thousand dollars."

She paused at this climax like the true artist she was. There was a sobbing gasp from Mr. Chesterfield. Seventy-five thousand dollars! He had paid Duval one hundred and fifty.

"I protested against it," she went on, "but he just laughed and said that

everything would be all right. He was going to make so much money that nothing mattered. The 'killing,' as he called it, was to be made two or three days before Christmas. There would be time to buy it back, and we would be so rich that price would not matter."

She turned suddenly to Chesterfield, her eyes bright with a naïve innocence.

"Oh, Mr. Chesterfield," she said, "could you—could you lend it to me for to-morrow? Just one day!"

"Of course," said Chesterfield.

"But, of course, you bought it to give to some girl. You can't lend it to me. She must have it on Christmas."

"I know of no girl to whom to give it," said Chesterfield. "All I care about now is to know how it got here."

"I'm just telling you. Larry's scheme must have failed. He hasn't been home in two days. It seems impossible to get any one down there on the telephone. But I trusted him up to the last moment. I was simply crazy, and along toward evening I decided to drive down to see Mr. Duval and try to borrow it from him. It was awfully late, about seven when we got there, but Mr. Duval was still there.

"He wasn't a bit nice. He wouldn't lend it to me, and he was almost rude. He said that it was just going out of the place on its way to a purchaser. Mike—he is the chauffeur—is like all old, family servants. He takes liberties, though he means well. He came upstairs with me and heard the whole thing, and, of course, he only wanted to help me out. We saw the young man starting off with the package, and we knew that was the last of the buckle."

She drew a long, shuddering breath. Mr. Slade heaved a great sigh and stirred uneasily. Miss O'Brien, glancing timidly at her auditors, continued:

"Our motor stood a little way down the street and it was quite dark. The young man with the package was going in that direction, and we had to walk

right behind him. Just as we reached our car, Mike hit the young man and knocked him down. I had no idea what was happening. The first thing I knew he had given me the package and told me to go off somewhere and meet him there again in an hour. Then he jumped in the car, stepped on it, and was off before I could say a word. The young man was sitting up on the sidewalk and shouting that he had been robbed. People were beginning to run after the car. There was an awful commotion. I turned around and walked over toward Fifth Avenue. I felt that some one was following me, just as I reached Fleuret's, and so I stepped inside. And then I found you there, Mr. Chesterfield."

"And we dined together and you gave me the money to pay for the check." Chesterfield drew the little wad of small bills from his pocket.

"And all the time I sat there I had your buckle inside my blouse, although I had no idea it was yours. The first thing I did when I got to the house was to rush in and put it back where it belonged. I was just crazy to get it back there. It seemed safer. And then you saw it—and I thought I was going to faint, or something."

The narrative came to an impressive pause. Like the sultan who hearkened to Scheherazade, Mr. Slade was enchanted and bemused. Things happened so surprisingly on this New York night.

"Then you didn't steal it, after all," he said at length.

"But there it is," said Miss O'Brien, who loved the truth.

"It was the chauffeur. He gave it to you. You didn't know what was in it."

"Didn't I?"

"You couldn't have sworn to it. And you didn't put him up to do it."

"Certainly not."

"Then you have committed no crime."

"Of course not."

"And I'll say they can't arrest you."

"I know it," said Miss O'Brien.

The idea was too much for Mr. Slade. The whole world slid down to one side and tried to turn upside down. Here he sat, there was the emerald buckle, and he was pleading the case of the person he had meant to arrest. The contradiction of ideas was intolerable. He could see the other two regarding him calmly and wondered why they did not notice that his head was coming apart. He licked his dry lips and tried to speak, but could not. He had said too much already.

The butler came to his rescue, opening the door and confronting the company with the air of one who has a solemn announcement to make.

"Mr. Larry has arrived," he said.

The men rose suddenly. Miss O'Brien darted to the door.

Both men were looking for something in the nature of a ruined prodigal, some one showing the signs of dissipation, a wild, crushed, unworthy creature, remorseful and despairing; the sort of home-coming one would rather not watch.

Instead, the young man who stood in the doorway embracing his sister was the very figure of high spirits and triumphant good fortune. The aura of success that surrounded his strong and vigorous personality was undeniable. Like his sister, he was a radiant, sound, wholesome being, but with a sort of lean hardness and mastery in his face. They were plainly devoted to each other. He acknowledged the introduction his sister made, masking his curiosity with an offhand courtesy.

"Pat," he said, "I hope these gentlemen, whom I am sure I am delighted to see, will pardon me. But I simply must tell you that everything is all right."

"Then we're not ruined?"

"Ruined!" His laugh told a different tale.

"And you haven't lost all your money?"

"Pat, I've made a fortune. Go and buy a couple of horses and another automobile."

Patricia clasped his arm with her hands. There was something touching in their frank affection and happiness.

"We'll give Uncle Horace the best Christmas he ever had," he went on. "I can buy that buckle back from Duval. I have the money now. I tried to get it from the old screw on the way up. That's one thing that kept me a little late. But he was gone. I felt like breaking in and stealing it."

"Oh, you felt that way, too," said Slade.

O'Brien favored him with a stare, but before he could speak, his sister, in a perfect hurricane of high spirits, dragged him to the cabinet and pointed in triumph to the cabochon emeralds. They winked up at him with their usual effect.

"In the name of all the saints!" he said. "How did they get here?"

"Mike stole them and I brought them here. And this is the detective to arrest us. And this is Mr. Chesterfield, who owns the emeralds."

Mr. O'Brien's bearing was not that of a man easily put at a loss. Now, however, he opened his mouth but seemed unable to speak. The other three broke forth into a perfect babble of exclamation. Slade had lost his headquarters air and was carried away by the interest of the story and plainly captivated by Miss O'Brien. His bass formed a running accompaniment to her musical treble, while Chesterfield furnished a baritone. Three persons all talking vigorously at once can give the effect of a small crowd. It was a little like the sextet from "Lucia."

Earnest attention, the dawn of understanding, a final complete appreciation of the comedy, each in turn dominated

the expression of Mr. O'Brien's face. He held up his hands.

"To-morrow or next day I shall be able to believe this," he said. "It's too much all at once. Who made up this story, anyway?"

"Nobody," said Slade.

"Fate," said Chesterfield.

"The cabochon emeralds did it," said Miss O'Brien. "They are enchanted. They have fairies in them."

"It has been a long day for me," said her brother, "the biggest day of a lifetime—of several lifetimes."

"Tell me about it," said Miss O'Brien. "What happened? You say you made a lot of money. Was it perfectly fair and honest?"

"Certainly. The people who lost knew what they were facing. The public didn't lose anything. I'm in a daze yet. It hung fire for a day or two. We had to get control of certain blocks of stock before we could start it up. Mr. Bryan himself has been tremendously kind to me. Of course it was on father's account. He told me ten days ago what he was going to do. He let me in on the ground floor."

Chesterfield had been listening to this with a new surge of emotion and interest. Stripped of its usual careless air, his face was a picture of intensity. He had never been so thoroughly awake. Even the fight with Slade in retrospect seemed a dreamy thing in comparison with the shrill enormity of the present moment.

"O'Brien," he said, in a voice that surprised every one, himself included, "were you speaking of the Bryan corner in Amalgamated Motors?"

They confronted each other. O'Brien's mouth assumed the shape of one about to say "oh!" But no sound proceeded. He was realizing that this tall, strange man was the Chesterfield you read about in the society columns, the famous Preston Chesterfield, the gilded youth whose money was in Sharpe, Martin & Co.

Their two faces told an interesting story.

"Mr. Chesterfield," said Miss O'Brien, "has Larry ruined you? You lost a lot of money to-day. I know it. That's why you were sitting all by yourself on Christmas Eve in Fleuret's. Tell the truth now!"

"I was rather hard hit," said Chesterfield.

"Mr. Chesterfield," said O'Brien, "it's not as bad for you as it looks in the papers. Mr. Bryan has nothing against Sharpe, Martin & Co."

"It isn't as *bad* for him!" cried his sister in a sort of ecstasy of excitement. "As *bad* for him! We stole his emerald buckle, and he saved me from being locked up, and he lent it to me so that Uncle Horace could see it to-morrow. And then he fought with Mr. Slade when he was going to arrest me. You never saw such a fight. It was terrible. You had no right to ruin him. We stole his emeralds, and the money you got for the emeralds was the money you put up against his. You'll have to give it all back." She was on her toes, her voice shaking.

"But the emeralds are ours," said O'Brien.

"But he bought them. Can't you understand?"

"In a minute or two. Give me time."

"Please don't excite yourself," said Chesterfield to Miss O'Brien. "It was my own carelessness."

"It isn't bad at all," said O'Brien, with a laugh. "I don't blame people for thinking you might have lost half your fortune. It certainly looked that way in the papers. You don't know the inside story. This was a strictly personal matter with Bryan. He's a fine man, but he has the disposition of an Indian and he goes after his enemies hard. He was after a certain group. They had tried to ruin his pet concern. Sharpe, Martin is not in that group. They were just pulled into the general smash. He's

going to make different terms with different shorts. That's why he is getting out of the Stock Exchange. He likes me pretty well, and he knows Uncle Horace, and when they hear the story of this emerald buckle and how you interfered to save Pat from being locked up—why, you'll be the favored individual. You'll be the envy of the Street!"

Mr. Chesterfield, sitting down, rested his elbows on his knees and his chin in his hands. It was a moment of relaxation. It seemed almost an anticlimax that this fortune was to be restored to him. When he looked up he met the eyes of Miss O'Brien bent on him with an expression so full of gratitude and approbation as to set him tingling again in a bewilderingly agreeable way.

The butler had been listening behind the door. No creature of flesh and blood could have done otherwise. He opened it.

"There's a big car full of people coming up the drive," he said.

"Show them all in here," said O'Brien. "This has been a great day for Ireland and we're going to have a party."

In the hall arose a babble of voices, feminine as well as masculine, and the sound of numerous footsteps. Duval's assistant, looking less dapper than usual, led the procession. Duval followed, ushering in two ladies.

To the immeasurable and final astonishment of Chesterfield, he found himself gazing on the dignified face of Mrs. Dupuy and the beautiful one of her daughter. Mrs. Dupuy was, as she said herself, "always the same." He had last seen Pauline in tears. Now there seemed a suppressed elation in her manner. She had never looked better. They took his appearance there as a matter of course. It was evident that they thought he had arrived there with the police officer in pursuit of the stolen buckle.

"My poor boy," said Mrs. Dupuy, going directly to him and laying her hand on his sleeve. "Mr. Duval called us up and told us of the loss of the emeralds and that you had planned them as a gift for my girl. It was beautiful of you."

Chesterfield was embarrassed. It looked as if his broken engagement were in a fair way to be mended without any action of his. He cast a glance at Pauline, but could make nothing of her expression. Her evident elation was unaccountable.

"There is the woman," said Duval, pointing to Miss O'Brien. "Where is the buckle?"

"I identify her," said the assistant. "She took it from the man who hit me."

The deputy commissioner entered the room last of all. He nodded in recognition to Chesterfield and turned inquiringly to Slade.

"Arrest the woman," said Duval.

"Let her alone," called Chesterfield from his position beside Mrs. Dupuy. "She didn't steal the thing. I lent it to her."

"You lent it to her!" said Duval. His face was purple and his eyes were bulging.

"Slade," said Chesterfield, "I'm talking to a lady. Can't you explain this thing? You know the whole story. I accept delivery of the buckle from Mr. Duval and will receipt for it any time. I have positively no charges to make. Now you explain the whole thing."

"Preston," said Mrs. Dupuy, drawing him a little farther away from the clamoring group and speaking with a show of affection, "I am so glad that we came up here. Knowing that the buckle was intended for Pauline, we wanted to be with Mr. Duval when it was found. He kindly offered the use of his car."

"Very nice of him, indeed," said Chesterfield.

"I was so glad to see you here. You must have had a terrible day. I am sorry for what happened this afternoon. We were both a little hasty. When Pauline heard that you had gone, she was inconsolable. The dear girl is so affectionate. And later on, when Mr. Duval, in his excitement, called up our house thinking you might be there, for you were not at home, and she learned of your beautiful thought in making her such a wonderful gift, she was absolutely heartbroken. She wants to talk to you now."

Chesterfield was unable to express the definite feeling of protest he felt rising within him. He did not want to talk to Pauline. He glanced around the room. Duval was engaged in an animated conversation with Mr. O'Brien and the two police officials. He appeared on the verge of apoplexy. It looked as if the heavy personalities opposed to him were wearing him down.

On the other side of the room stood Pauline and Miss O'Brien, each beautiful in her own way, their arms about one another's shoulders. The fact that they were apparently friends of old standing seemed a very commonplace in this unearthly scheme of things. Mrs. Dupuy gave him a little push on the arm.

"Do go and talk to Pauline," she said. "She needs you. It is time you two got together and made things up."

Seeing there was no mistake, Chesterfield moved off. Pauline greeted him with a low, gurgling laugh and a graceful gesture of the arm.

"I am so glad you know Patricia," she said. "We were schoolmates together at Miss Spence's, and the most wonderful friends! She has just been telling me about you. What a comedy of errors this has been! Don't you think Patricia is perfectly wonderful?"

In the face of two pretty girls, two pairs of blue eyes, each sending a mes-

sage of mingled mockery and affection, Chesterfield was almost tongue-tied.

"Your mother said we ought to have a talk together," he said.

"I'm ready," said Pauline.

The girls untwined themselves and Chesterfield followed Pauline down the hall and through the open door. It had stopped snowing some time ago, and the last ragged clouds had swept away. The shine from the snow and from innumerable stars made it easy to see. Pauline was a graceful and charming figure in her long coat and tricorn hat.

In spite of the undeniable beauty of the young lady, Chesterfield felt his heart turning to lead within him. Freedom, even with ruin attached to it, had been so sweet. Losing fortunes, fighting pugilists, beginning to experience the allurements of a new and different girl—that was the life.

If a man is jilted, let him stay jilted. Once life has started all over again, he does not want to be dragged back to the sphere he has left. It is the sweet beginnings of things, the rosy dawn of romance and affection that pull the hardest at the heartstrings.

Pauline looked him in the eye and read him. She smiled her slow smile. Her cheeks were faintly flushed, her eyes were bright, there was a tender animation in her manner.

He wondered gloomily if any other man had ever known such a springtime in his affairs on Christmas Eve. Pauline, he thought, was about to put an end to it all.

"Preston," she said, confronting him, "you are afraid of me! Don't deny it! What did mother say to you?"

"She said you wanted to talk to me."

"So I do, Preston. I'm in love."

"In love!"

"Not with you, you dear stupid! We've been engaged to please the families for ever so many years, but we just couldn't manage to fall in love, could we?"

"I don't know."

"Yes, you do know. I'm engaged now to Melville Cram!"

"Cram! Why, Pauline!"

"Yes, you needn't shout at me. I know you didn't like him, to-day. But you used to like him, and you will some day again. He's different from you. We understand each other. Anyway, I'm engaged to him, and I'm in love with him—and he's my man."

"When did this happen?"

"This afternoon, after you left. He was trying to console me, and I guess we found out that we both had been trying not to care for ever so long. And so we stopped trying. And I'm awfully happy. I never knew what living was before. This is the real thing."

"But your mother?"

"She doesn't know about this. She's been trying to make me marry you. She really likes you. I know we'd never get on."

"I suppose I haven't 'pep' enough for a girl like you."

"You have everything, Preston. But you've never been really awakened up in your life before. Don't say anything to mother. If she won't give her consent, we'll elope. But I'm not going to spoil my Christmas for her."

"How about my Christmas?"

"You are going to have the best Christmas you ever had. You know you feel lots happier not being engaged to me."

"Pauline, I—"

"Don't try to tell me the truth, for you can't. Your manners are too good. Patricia O'Brien's in love with you now, and you are falling in love so fast I can see it in your face. Have a good time, you little dears!"

"Don't be silly."

"I'm not silly; but I'm so happy, I'm going to be." She glanced about her to see that no one was in sight and caught the lapels of his coat.

"It's too bad you didn't wake up be-

fore," she said. "I'm not your kind. But, after all, I like you, dear."

For the first time the real Pauline shone out from her eyes—human, good, and somehow faultful as well, beneath a cold and passionless exterior. She swayed toward him and kissed him warmly on the lips. The perfume of her presence enveloped him. It was as if he had been embraced by a fragrant rosebush.

The door opened and a number of people emerged, Mrs. Dupuy in the lead.

"Come, children," she said in her modulated voice, "you have been billing and cooing out there long enough. I don't want my big girl to catch cold."

She pretended not to see Pauline disengaging herself from Chesterfield, but nothing escaped her eye.

"Don't give me away," whispered Pauline, as they went toward the door. "Mother heard at dinner that you hadn't lost so much, after all. And she really likes you in her own way—more than any one except me, I guess. I want her to have a pleasant Christmas. I'll break the news about Melville later on. Don't give me away, will you? Patricia knows."

"I won't say anything."

"You're a dear." With a final pat on his arm she left him to join her mother.

"You are a good girl," said Mrs. Dupuy complacently. She was pleased and satisfied with her evening's work. Duval had given her the cards to play. Again, Pauline was Preston's fiancée. For once in her life, Pauline had succeeded in deceiving her mother.

Inside, the atmosphere had taken on a holiday tang and glow. The fire was roaring up the chimney, the place had the air of a Christmas party. Assisted by a maid, Mr. O'Brien was hanging up mistletoe and holly wreaths. Another maid was passing around sandwiches. The butler was engaged in the evidently congenial task of opening bottles of champagne. Mr. Slade and

the uniformed policeman were lending able assistance in the disposition of the evergreens. Mr. Duval was shaking hands with Patricia in his very best manner. His assistant was folding up a bill which Chesterfield had given him. Even his Christmas was to be a happy one. He had consented to a dismissal of the charge against the chauffeur. It was worth the money. The commissioner was just hanging up the receiver of the telephone. He had sent word for the liberation of the chauffeur whose impulsive act had started the ball rolling. Everybody was laughing and talking at once. It was a real Christmas party.

"Now," said the energetic Mr. O'Brien, leaping to the ground from the table where he had been standing, "we are all set and everybody's happy. Mr. Chesterfield is going to stay all night. We have to talk things over. The rest are going to drink a toast. Pass the glasses, Tim; we have a case or two of the old stuff left."

The firelight gleamed in the mahogany and on the dark pictures and hangings, the logs roared and crackled, the wine creamed upward in delightful foam, the cabochon emeralds winked wickedly from the cabinet. There was a tinkling of glasses, a bubble of laughter, a chorus of "Merry Christmas!" in various tones. Everybody had a glass of wine, even the butler and the maids. Mr. Duval had two or three. Everybody save the athletic Mr. Slade. He was quite happy with another pitcher of hot water. The guests began to prepare to go. There was a shaking of hands, a bidding of farewells, a putting on of wraps, a slow exodus.

"This has been a short party, but it has been a peach," said Mr. O'Brien. "We must all do it again."

They piled into the autos, some into Duval's, some into the deputy commissioner's, a merry crowd of holiday makers.

Chesterfield, with O'Brien and Patricia, stood out in the snow watching them off. The babble of voices sounded fainter. They were gone. It was a still, beautiful night of brilliant stars. The last cloudy squadrons of the storm had ridden off, out of the sky. The house, formerly dim lit, was now brilliant with light and wreaths in every window. Santa Claus was at his business.

"I'll show you where to put your car," said Miss O'Brien. "We have an old barn we call a garage, and there's lots of room in it."

They drove slowly into it, pushed shut the doors, and walked back across the snow.

"So you are not going to give the emeralds to Miss Dupuy, after all?" said Miss O'Brien.

"Did she tell you that?"

"She told me the whole story. I think she's going to be happy with Mr. Cram—so happy. She thinks a lot of you, too."

"Everybody admires Pauline."

"This must have been as bad a day for you as for me."

"I think, looking back, I liked it on the whole. It seems a hundred years since this afternoon. I've lived! I won a squash tournament, and I lost a fortune. I was jilted, and then I fought with a policeman who is going to be a prize fighter. And I got my fortune back. And I've been surprised more in an hour or so than I thought possible—and mystified."

"That was the best of it, wasn't it?"

"No, the best of it was meeting you."

"Really?"

"Don't you know it was? Tell the truth. This is Christmas Eve when everybody ought to tell the truth. Our meeting was the best part of it, wasn't it?"

"Perhaps."

They were alone in the big room again, looking down at the cabochon

emerald buckle. It had spoken to Chesterfield once before that evening. Now it addressed them both.

"Christmas Eve is almost over," it said. "It is seldom, even on Christmas, that I behave so kindly as I have today. In one half turn of the clock I have given you all that life has to give, all the illusion, all the glamour that makes life bearable and glorious. You have fought, you have been disappointed, you have been frightened, you have been stirred emotionally to the depths, you have been happy. You are breathing now the enchanted air of the early spring of love. The Christmas rose has unfolded for you. The joy that lies hidden in the heart of things is yours.

"I have always stirred up strife. Ladies have sighed for me; I have made them jealous. Nobles have fought for me; I have made them mad. Many tragedies and few comedies have been of my making; never before, never again, one like this. Here I have given you the happy ending. I seldom do it, because it is seldom good art, and I have the soul of a hundred artists in me. Better close my case now, before I change my mind."

"Do you know," said Patricia, "I'm getting afraid. The emeralds scare me. Let's close the case."

She suited the action to the word.

Chesterfield looked down into her eyes. The kiss of Pauline was still on his lips, the languor of her eyes was in his memory—but she was well gone, a kindly memory.

Here were other eyes that could really talk to him, some one whose every gesture, every intonation was familiar and meaningful. Half unconsciously he held out one hand a little, and Patricia's small, warm hand found a nest there. The clock in the corner struck twelve. It was Christmas morning.

"And you'll lend me them for the day?" said Patricia. They were both suddenly self-conscious.

"For a hundred years."

"I won't need them that long."

Chesterfield looked up at the heavy chandelier above the cabinet. It was dark with evergreens, through which shone scarlet berries, and other berries of waxy white.

"Do you know," he said, "I believe your brother has put a mistletoe up in that chandelier?"

"Perhaps he has," said Patricia faintly and slowly. Her eyes opened bewilderingly, then drooped half closed, her breast rose in a deep and tremulous sigh. But she neither drew away from him nor sought to disengage her hand from his.



WHAT THE WELL-BRED WOMAN WILL DO.

NOTHING earthly has ever prevented a woman from having the fantasies, temptations and impulses of her sex. Look at the Princess Bess. This lady, it has been said, shot and, if you please, killed an actress with whom her husband—her own husband, not the actress—was taking tea. She did not begin there either. She shot a servant who opposed her entrance to the villa, where the tea drinking was going on. The story may be untrue; if so, it is all the more interesting. Anyway, it is quaint. Though not, perhaps, in the best of taste. A well-bred woman never sees anything that was not intended for her.

—Edgar Saltus.

by
Leonard Merrick

Author of



*A Chair on
the Boulevard*

FLOROMOND *and* FRISONNETTE

FLOROMOND and Frisonnette, who are giddy with a sense of wealth now that they have three rooms, and flowers growing on their own balcony, and sit upon chairs that they have actually bought and paid for, held a reception last Monday. The occasion was a christening. Floromond and Frisonnette are, of course, Monsieur and Madame Jolicœur, and they live in the part of Paris that is nearest to Arcadia. Among those present were Monsieur Tricotrin, the unadmired poet; Monsieur Pitou, the composer of no repute; Monsieur Lajeunie, whose stirring romances have not reached the printing press, and Monsieur Sanguereau, the equally distinguished sculptor.

Though the company were poor in pocket, they were rich in benevolence; and, since the dearth of sous forbade silver mugs, they modeled their gifts

upon the example of the good fairies. Advancing graciously to the cradle, the bard bestowed upon the female infant the genius of poesy.

"Epics and odes," he declared, "shall fall from her lips like the gentle dew from heaven!"

"And symphonies," said the musician, "she shall rain upon her path as Englishwomen rain hairpins."

That she might be equipped more fully yet for the stress of modern life, the novelist endowed her with the power of surpassing narrative; while the sculptor, in his turn, contributed to her quiver the preëminence of Praxiteles.

Then Frisonnette hung over her baby, saying: "And one boon besides—let her marry her sweetheart and always remember that a husband's love is better than an ermine cloak!"—an allusion that moved Floromond to such tenderness that he forthwith took his wife in

his arms, regardless of us all, and that reminded your obedient servant of their story.

When Floromond beheld her first, she was in a shop window, the most tempting exhibit that a shop window had displayed to him in all his five and twenty years. If he had stayed in the quarter where he belonged, it would not have happened. It was early on a spring morning, and she was posing a hat for the enticement of ladies who would tread the Rue la Fayette later in the day. Floromond, sunning himself like a lord, though he was nothing better than a painter, went on to the garden of the Tuileries, noting how nicely the birds sang and thinking foolish thoughts.

"Had I a thousand-franc note in my pocket instead of an importunate bill from a washerwoman," ran his reverie, "I would go back and buy that hat, and when she asked me where to send it I would say: 'I do not know your name and address, mademoiselle!' Then, having departed without another word, leaving her speechless with amazement and delight, I should never see her any more—until, not too long afterward, we found ourselves by accident in the same omnibus. *Ciel*, how blue her eyes were!"

And, though he did not omit to improve himself in the most conscientious manner, and the weather changed for the worse, his admiration drew him to the Rue la Fayette at the same hour every day.

Frisonnette's demeanor behind the plate glass was propriety itself. But she could not be unconscious that the young man's pace always slackened in the downpour as he approached Madame Auréole's; she could not be insensible of the homage of his gaze. That Tuesday morning when, dripping, he bowed, his salutation was so respectful

that she felt she would be inhuman to ignore it.

So the time came when they trod the Rue la Fayette together, making confessions to each other, after the shop shut.

"I used to wonder at first whether you noticed me as I went by," he told her wistfully.

"I noticed you from the beginning," she owned; "you have such a funny walk. The day that you were late I thought——"

"I had pawned my watch. *Sapristi*, how I raced! It makes me perspire to think of it."

"I took five minutes longer than usual to dress the window, waiting for you."

"If I had guessed! And you did not divine that I came on purpose?"

She shook her head.

"I used to think that you must be employed in the neighborhood."

"What? You took me for a clerk?" asked the artist, horrified.

"Only at the start. I soon saw that you couldn't be that—your clothes were too shabby, and your hair was so long."

"I could have wished you to correct the impression by reason of my air of intellect. However, to talk sensibly, could the prettiest girl in France ever care for a man who had shabby clothes and a funny walk?"

"Well, when she was beside him she would not remark them much," admitted Frisonnette shyly. "But I do not think that you should ask me conundrums until you have talked politics with my aunt; I feel sure she would consider it premature."

"Mademoiselle," said Floromond, "I am rejoiced to hear that your aunt has such excellent judgment. Few things would give me greater pleasure than to agree with her politics as soon as you can procure me the invitation."

And one day Floromond and Frisonnette descended the steps of a certain *mairie* arm in arm—Frisonnette in a

white frock and a-flutter—and the elderly gentleman in the *salles des mariages*, to whom brides were more commonplace than blackberries, looked after this one with something like sentiment behind his pince-nez. A policeman at the gate was distinctly heard to murmur: "*Epatanté!*" And so rapidly had the rumor of her fairness flown that there were nearly as many spectators on the sidewalk as if it had been a marriage of money with vehicles from the livery stables.

The bride's aunt wore her *moiré antique*, with coral bracelets, and at breakfast in the restaurant she wept. But, as was announced on the menu: Wedding couples and their parties were offered free admission to the zoological gardens; pianos were at the disposal of the ladies; and an admirable photographer executed *gratuitously* portraits of the couples, or a group of their guests. At the promise of being photographed in the *moiré antique*, a thing that had not occurred to her for thirty years, the old lady recovered her spirits, and if Tricotrin, in proposing the health of the happy pair, had not digressed into tearful reminiscences of a blighted love story of his own, there would have been no further pathetic incident.

Floromond and Frisonnette, like foreigners more fashionable, "spent their honeymoon in Paris," for, of course, Frisonnette had to keep on selling Auréole's hats. Home was reached by a narrow staircase, which threatened never to leave off, and, after business hours, the sweethearts—as ridiculously enchanted with each other as if they had never been married—would exchange confidences and kisses at a little window that was like the upper half of a Punch-and-Judy show, popped among the chimney pots of the slanting tiles as an afterthought.

"It is good to have so exalted a position," said Frisonnette. "There is no

one to overlook us nearer than the angels. But I pray you not to mention it to the concierge, or our rent will soon be as high as our lodging. The faint object that you may discern below, my Floromond, is Paris, and the specks passing by are people."

"They must not pass us by too long, however, beloved," said Floromond. "I am a married man and awake to my responsibilities. It would not suit me, by any manner of means, to share you with millinery all your dear little life. More than ever I have resolved to be eminent, and when the plate glass can never separate us again, you shall have dessert twice a day, and a *bonne* to wash the dishes."

"My child," murmured Frisonnette, "come and perch on my lap while I talk wisdom to you, for you are very young, and you have been such a little while in paradise that you have not learned the ways of its habitants. It chagrins you that you cannot give me dessert, and domestics, and a *cinéma* every Saturday night. But because I worship you, my little sugar husband, because every moment that I pass away from you, among the millinery, seems to me as long as the Rue de Vaugirard, I do not think of such things when we are together. To be in your arms is enough. Life looks to me divine, and if I find anything at all lacking in our heaven, it is merely a second cupboard. Now, since you are too heavy for me, you may jump down, and we will reverse the situation."

"I have strange tidings to reveal to you," said Floromond, squeezing the breath out of her; "I adore you, Frisonnette!"

They remained so blissful that many people were of the opinion that Providence was neglecting its plain duty. Here was a thriftless painter daring to marry a girl without a franc and finding the course of wedlock run as smooth as if he had been a prosperous grocer

with branches in the suburbs! The example set to the youth of the Quarter was shocking. And a year passed, and two years passed, and still the angels might see Floromond and Frisonnette kissing at the attic window.

Then one afternoon it happened that a French beauty, hastening along the Rue la Fayette with tiny, uncertain steps, as if her bust were too heavy for her feet, found herself arrested by a toque on view at Auréole's, and, entering with condescension, was still more charmed by the assistant who attended to her. The chance customer was no one less important than the wife of Finot—Finot, the dressmaker; Finot, the famous—and at dinner that night, when they had reached the cheese, she said to the great man:

"My little cabbage, at a milliner's of no distinction I have come across a blonde who could wipe the floor with every mannequin we boast. She is as chic as a model, and as bright as a sequin; she is just the height to do justice to a manteau, her neck would go beautifully with an evening gown, and she has hips that were created for next season's skirt."

"Let her call!" said the great man, adding a few drops of kirsch to his *petit suisse*.

"She would be good business, I assure you," declared the lady. "She talked me into taking a toque more than twice the price of the one I went in for—me! Well, I shall have to find a pretext for speaking to her. I must go back and see if there is another hat that I care to buy."

"It is not necessary," replied her husband. "Go back and complain of the one you bought."

So the lady talked to Frisonnette in undertones, and Frisonnette listened to her in bewilderment, not quite certain whether she was twirling to the top of her ladder, or being victimized by a diabolical hoax. And the following

forenoon she passed, by appointment, through imposing portals that often she had eyed with awe. And Finot, having satisfied himself that she had brains, and taste—for they are very wide of the mark who think of his pampered mannequins as elegant mechanical toys—signified his august approval.

Frisonnette went home and described the splendors of the place to Floromond, who congratulated her with a misgiving that he tried to stifle. And later on she told him of the dazzling déjeuners that were provided, repasts that she vowed stuck in her throat because he was not there to share them. And, not least, she sought to picture to him the gowns that she wore and sold. Oh, visions of another world, there were things for which the vocabulary of the Académie Française would be inadequate! Such clothes looked too celestial to be touched. But she was a woman. Though her head was spinning as Finot's mirrors reflected her magnificence, though she was admiring herself illimitably, she accomplished so casual an air that one might have thought that she had never put on anything cheaper in her life.

And, being a woman, she did not suffer from a spinning head very long; she soon became acclimatized.

In the daytime, Frisonnette ate delicate food, and sauntered through stately showrooms, robed like a queen—and in the evening she turned slowly to her little old frock, and supped on scraps in the garret. And now her laughter sounded seldom there. Gradually the contentment that had found a heaven under the tiles changed to a petulance that found beneath them nothing to commend. Her gaze was somber, and often she sighed. And the misgiving that Floromond had tried to stifle knocked louder at his heart.

By and by the little old frock was discarded and thrust out of view, and she wore costumes that made the gar-

ret look gaunter still, for, with her increased salary and commissions, she could afford such things. Floromond knew no regret when she ceased to speak of bettering their abode; instead, his pride had revolted at the thought of astonishing their neighbors on his wife's money; but the smart costumes made her seem somebody different in his eyes, and moodily he felt that it was presumption for a fellow in such a threadbare coat to try to kiss her.

"What a swell you are nowadays!" the poor boy would say, forcing a smile.

And Frisonette would scoff.

"A swell? This rag!" as she recalled with longing the gorgeous toilets that graced her in the showroom.

One treasure there she coveted with all her soul. It was an ermine cloak, so beautiful that simply to stroke it thrilled her with ecstasy. Only once had she had an opportunity of luxuriating in its folds; under its seductive caress she had promenaded on the Aubusson carpet, for the allurements of an *Américaine* who, after all, had chosen something else. The mannequin used to think that she who possessed it should be the proudest woman in the world, and twice the painter had been awakened to hear her murmuring rhapsodies of it in her sleep.

"If I could sell my 'Ariadne' and carry her away to some romantic cottage among the meadows!" he would say to himself disconsolately. "Then she would see no more of the fangles and flounces that have divided us; she would be my sweetheart just as she used to be."

But the best that he could do was to sell his potboilers, and a romantic cottage among the meadows looked no nearer to his purse than a corner mansion in the Avenue van Dyck.

That the fangles and flounces had indeed divided them was more apparent still as time went on, so much so that frequently he passed the evening at a

café to avoid the heartache of watching her repine. But it was really waste of coppers, for he thought of the change in her all the while, and when he lagged up the high staircase on his return, he was remembering at every step the Frisonette who formerly had run to greet him at the top.

"You are a devoted companion!" she would remark bitterly as he entered. "What can you imagine that I do with myself in this hole all the evening while you stay carousing outside?"

"I imagine that you sit turning up your nose at everything, as you do when I am with you," he would answer, hiding his pain.

Then Frisonette would cry that he was a bear, and Floromond would retort that her own temper had not improved, which was certainly true. And after she had exclaimed that it was false, and stamped her foot furiously to prove it, she would burst into tears, and wonder why she remained with a man who, not content with forsaking her for cafés, came home and calumniated her nose and her temper besides.

Meanwhile, Finot had been contemplating her performances on the Aubusson carpet with rising respect. His versatile mind was now projecting the winter advertisements, and he determined to intrust to his best blonde one of those duties, which, from time to time, rendered the luckiest of his mannequins objects of unspeakable envy to all the rest. Finot's advertisements were conducted on a scale becoming a firm whose annual profits ran into millions of francs.

"*Mon enfant,*" he said to her, "you have been a very good girl. And, though you may think that you are rewarded royally already, as indeed you are"—and here followed an irritating dissertation upon the softness of her job, to which she listened with impatience—"I am preparing a treat for you of the first order. How would it please

you to travel for a couple of months or so, a little later on?"

"To travel—I?" she stammered.

"You, and one of the other young ladies. Say, to Berlin, Monte Carlo, Rome?"

"Rome?" ejaculated Frisonnette, who had never dreamed of reaching any other "Rome" than the one on the Metropolitan Railway.

"Mademoiselle Piganne would contrast most effectively with your tints, I think." He screwed up his eyes. "Y-e-s, we could hardly evolve a color scheme more delicious than you and Mademoiselle Piganne! Whatever capitals we may decide on, you will stay at the hotels of the highest standing. All matters like that you will do best to leave to the judgment of the chaperon in attendance on you both; otherwise you might have the unfortunate experience to find yourself in a hotel not exclusively patronized by the cream of society.

"Your personal wardrobe, for which you will be supplied with from twelve to fourteen trunks, will consist of those creations of my art which approach most nearly to the fulfillment of my ideals, and your affair will be to attract sensational interest in them, while preserving an attitude of the severest propriety. That is imperative, remember! No English or American mother, with her *jeunes filles* beside her, must for a single instant doubt that you are morally deserving of her stare.

"An open carriage in the park where the climate permits, a stage box at the opera when the audience is most brilliant, will, of course, suggest themselves to your mind. But, again, the duenna and the manservant will organize the program as skillfully as they will look the parts! All that will be required of you is a display, brilliant and untiring; the rest will be done by others. Every woman everywhere will instruct her maid to find out all about you, and your

maid—an employee of the firm in a humble capacity—will have orders to whisper that you are a princess, traveling incognito, and that your costumes come from me."

Frisonnette could do no more than pant: "I will speak about it at home, monsieur, at once!"

And, because she foresaw with resentment that Floromond's approval would be far from warm, she broached the subject to him very diffidently.

At the back of the little head that Finot's finery had turned, she knew well that if her "bear" betook himself too often to cafés, it was mortified love that drove him to them; so she made haste to tell him:

"It might be the best thing for you to get rid of me for a couple of months. I should return in a much better humor, and you would find me quite nice again."

"You think so, Frisonnette?" said Floromond, with a sad smile.

"What do you mean?" she asked, paling.

"I mean," he sighed, "that after the 'brilliant display,' it is not our ménage under the tiles that would seem to you idyllic repose. Heaven knows it goes against the grain to beg a sacrifice, but if you accept such luxury, I feel that you would never bear our straits together again. Do not deceive yourself, little one; you would be leaving me, not for two months, but forever!"

Deep in her consciousness had lurked this thought, too, and she turned from him in guilty silence.

"You are fond of me, then," she muttered at last, "in spite of all?"

"If I am fond of you!" groaned Floromond. "Ah, Frisonnette, Frisonnette, there is no moment, even when you are coldest, that I would not give my life for you. I curse the poverty that prevents me tearing you from these temptations and making you entirely mine once more. If I were rich! It is

I who would give you boxes at the opera and carriages in the park. I would wrap you in that ermine cloak, and pour all the jewels of Boucheron's window in your lap."

"I will not go!" she cried, weeping. "Forgive me, forgive the way I have behaved! I have been wicked, yes! But I repent. It is ended—I will not go!"

And all night she was proud and joyful to think that she would not go. It was only in the gray morning that her heart sank to remember it.

"I must decline," she said to Finot hesitatingly. "I have a husband. I—I could not take my husband?"

"*Mon enfant*, your husband would not grudge you the little holiday without him, one may be sure!"

It was as if she were being barred from Eden.

"And the ermine cloak," she faltered; "could I take the ermine cloak?"

The tempter smiled.

"One cannot doubt that, among fourteen trunks, there would be room for the ermine cloak," he told her suavely.

One November evening when Floromond came in, his wife was not there. He supposed that she had been detained in the showroom until he groped for a match—and then, in the dark, his hand touched an envelope, stuck in the box. He trembled so heavily that he seemed falling through an eternity of fear before he could light the lamp.

He read:

I am leaving you because I am frivolous and contemptible. I dare not entreat your pardon. But I shall never make you wretched any more.

When he noticed things again, from the chair in which he crouched, he found that the night had passed and daylight filled the room. He was shuddering with cold. And he got up feebly and wavered toward the bed.

"She did not ponder her words," babbled the aunt, who came to him aghast.

"She will return to you! When the two months are over, and she is back in Paris, you will see!"

"She pondered longer than you surmise, and she will never return to me," he said. "And, what is more, a man with nothing to offer can never presume to seek her. No; I have done with illusions—she will be no nearer to me in Paris than in Monte Carlo. Frisonnette's Paris and mine henceforth will be different worlds!"

Floromond lived, without Frisonnette, among the clothes that she had left behind; the dainty things that she had prized had been abandoned now that she was to be decked in masterpieces. They hung ownerless, the peignoir, and *tricot*, and the dresses—the pink, and the mauve, and the plaid—gathering the dust, and speaking of her to him always.

"She has soared above you, damn you!" he would shout sometimes, half mad with misery. "It was you who first estranged us—now it is your turn to be spurned!"

And, tossing sleepless, his fancy followed her; or, pacing the room, he projected some passionate indictment, which, on reflection, he never sent.

"You should try to work!" his reason told him. "If you worked, you might manage to forget in minutes."

And, setting his teeth, he took palette and brush and worked doggedly for hours. But he did not forget, and the result of his effort was so execrable that he knew that he was simply wasting good paint.

Then, because work was beyond him, and his purse was always emptier, he began to make *déjeuner* do for dinner, too. And not long after that he was reducing his rations more every day. It was a haggard Floromond who threaded his way among the crowds that massed the pavements when some weeks had passed. The boulevards were gay with booths of toys and trifles now;

great branches of holly glowed on the *barraques* of the flower venders at the street corners; and the restaurants, where throngs would fête the *Réveillon*, and New Year's Eve, displayed advice to merry-makers to book their tables well ahead.

"My rejoicings will be held at home!" said Floromond.

And, during the afternoon of New Year's Eve, it was by a stroke of irony that the first comrade who had rapped at his door since Frisonnette's flight came to propose expenditure.

"Two places go begging for the supper at the *Café du Bel Avenir*," he explained blithely, "and it struck me that you and your wife might join our party? Quite select, *mon vieux*! They promise to do one very well, and five francs a cover is to include everything but the wine."

"My wife has an engagement that she found it impossible to refuse," said the painter, huddled over the fading fire. "And, as for me, I am not hungry."

The other stared. "There is time enough for you to be hungry by midnight!"

"Yes, that is a fact," assented Floromond; "I may be most inconveniently hungry by midnight. But I am less likely to be scattering five francs. In plain French, my dear Bonvoisin, if you could lend me a few sous, I should feel comparatively prosperous. I am like the two places at the *Bel Avenir*—I go begging!"

Bonvoisin looked down his nose.

"I should have been overjoyed to accommodate you, of course," he mumbled; "but at this season, you know how it is! What with the pestilential tips to the concierge and the postman, and one thing and another, I am confoundedly hard up myself."

"All my sympathy!" said Floromond. "Amuse yourself well at the banquet!"

And he sprinkled a little more dust

over the dying *boulets* in the grate to prolong their warmth.

Outside, big snowflakes fell.

"The man who has never known poverty has never known his fellow man," he mused. "I would have sworn for Bonvoisin! He has inspired me with an aphorism, however—let us give Bonvoisin his duel! And, to take a rosy view of things, turkeys are very indigestible birds; and, since I lack the fuel to cook it, I am spared the fatigue of going out to buy one for my mahogany to-morrow. Really, there is much to be thankful for; the only trouble is to know where it is to be found. If I knew where enough tobacco for a cigarette was to be found, I would be thankful for that, also. How blue the Mediterranean is, to be sure, and how hotly the sun streams! We shall get freckles, she and I! Won't you spare me half of your beautiful sunshade, Frisonnette? Upon my word, I could grow light-headed with a little encouragement! I could imagine that the steps I hear on the staircase now are hers! Fortunately, I have too much self-control to let fancy fool me."

Nevertheless, as he leaned, listening, he was as white as a sheet.

The steps drew nearer.

"I realize, of course, that it is some one for the room on the other side; a moment more, and they will go by," he told himself, holding his breath.

But the steps halted, and a timid tap came.

He stumbled forward.

"It is a child with a bill—the laundress' child! I know perfectly that it is the laundress' child. I do not hope!" he lied, tearing the door open.

And Frisonnette stood there, asking to come in.

"I have run away," she quavered. Her teeth were chattering, and her fashionable coat was as white as a sandwich man's rags. "I should have come long ago, but I was ashamed."

"It is you?" queried Floromond, touching her. "You are not a dream?"

"Every day I have longed to be back with you, and at last I could bear no more. Do you think you might forgive me if you tried?"

"There is a tear on your cheek, and your dear little nose is pink with the cold, and the snow has taken your feathers out of curl," he answered, laughing and crying. "Let us pretend there are logs blazing up the chimney, and we will draw one chair to the hearth and tell each other how miserable we have been, or, better than that, how happy we are!"

But still she clung to him, shivering and condemning herself.

"And so," she repeated, "I ran away. It is a habit I am acquiring! Finot is furious, he has dismissed me. I have no job and no money; I have come back with nothing, my Floromond, but the clothes I stand up in. And—and why do I find you with an empty coal scuttle?"

"*Ma foi!*" he stammered, loath to deepen her distress, "as usual, that imbecile of a *charbonnier* has neglected to fulfill the order."

"He becomes intolerable," she faltered. "Is that why I notice that your tobacco pouch is empty, too?"

"Oh, as for the tobacco pouch," said the young man, "in this ferocious weather I have been reluctant to put on my boots."

"It is natural," murmured Frisonnette.

But her eyes were frightened, and she investigated the cupboard. And when the cupboard was discovered to be as empty as the pouch and the coal scuttle, she rushed to him in a panic.

"You are starving!" she moaned. "You have starved here, while I—*Mon Dieu*, I have not come home too soon!"

"Tut, tut!" said Floromond; "you are trying to pose me for a hero of ro-

mance? I have been an idle vagabond, that is all. The cat is out of the bag, though—you have come home, *ma Frisonnette adorée*, and I have nothing for your welcome but my embrace!"

And, thinking of the want that lay before her, he broke down.

"I love you, I love you, Floromond!" she wept.

"I love you," he sobbed; "I love you, Frisonnette!"

Then, in the waning daylight, arose a plaintive cry, the croon of the itinerant wardrobe dealer: "'*Chand d'habits!*'"

"'*Chand d'habits!*'" she gasped, and darted to the window. "'*Chand d'habits!*'" she screamed—and stripped the smart costume from her and stood triumphant in her petticoat.

Before the *marchand's* aged legs had toiled up half the stairs, she was back in the little old frock that had been cast aside.

"Hook me, my Floromond!" And her eager arms were laden, and her frozen hands showered raiment on the floor—the peignoir and *tricot*, and the dresses, the pink and the mauve and the plaid.

"We dine to-night!" she laughed. "Enter, '*Chand d'habits!*'"

"And, word of honor," observed Floromond, when the clocks of Paris had sounded twelve and the pair sat digesting their *entrecôte*, and toasting their toes, and she was rolling another cigarette for him, "word of honor, you have never looked more captivating than you do now! That frock becomes you marvelously! At the same time, the fine clothes that I have been gobbling lie somewhat heavy on my sensibilities, particularly the fascinating ribbons of the peignoir. If only I had kept my nose to the grindstone! Oh, if only we had something better to expect than this hand-to-mouth existence! Alas, on New Year's morning I cannot give you even a bunch of flowers!"

And at that moment hurrying feet approached the house, young and excited voices were heard below, and what should it prove to be— Well, what it *should* have proved to be was that his "Ariadne" had, in some ingenious way, been purchased by a large sum without his knowledge and that a contingent of the Quarter had arrived to proclaim his affluence; but, as a matter of semisober fact, it was only a posse of exhilarated students wishing

everybody the compliments of the season, and playing "*Le Chemin de l'Amour*" on a trombone.

Still, to-day, as we know, Floromond and Frisonnette have flowers on their own balcony, and three rooms, and chairs that they have actually bought and paid for, to say nothing of the baby. The moral of which is that there are more New Year's Days than one, and that it's never too late to hope. So we may all buck up!"



LOVERS should guard their strangeness. If they forgive too much, all slides into confusion and meanness.—*Ralph Waldo Emerson.*



By force of speaking of love we become enamored. There is nothing so easy. It is the passion most natural to man.—*Pascal.*



WOMEN for the most part do not love us. They do not choose a man because they love him, but because it pleases *them* to be loved by him.—*Alphonse Karr.*



LOVE brings to light the noble *and* hidden qualities of a lover—his rare and exceptional traits; it is thus liable to be deceptive as to his normal character.—*Friedrich Nietzsche.*



YOUTH is giddy, and when guided by sadness it changes and varies like the moon. And love, too, resembles that mendacious moon, which, when it appears to decrease, is merely growing toward its fullness.—*Henryk Sienkiewicz.*



It may rather be said that he loved himself in her, and that seeing in her limpid and artless eyes his image reflected and embellished, he complacently paused before them with the egotistic smile of a woman to the mirror that reveals her beauty.—*Alphonse Daudet.*



I SAW a woman sleeping. In her sleep she dreamed Life stood before her, and held in each hand a gift—in the one Love, in the other Freedom. And Life said to the woman, "Choose!" The woman waited long: then she said, "Freedom!" And Life said, "Thou hast well chosen. If thou hadst said 'Love,' I would have given thee that thou didst ask for; and I would have gone from thee, and returned to thee no more. Now, the day will come when I shall return. In that day I shall bear both gifts in one hand."

I heard the woman laugh in her sleep.—*Olive Shreiner.*

Matrimonial Adventure

By

Sholto and Reuben Percy

A NATIVE of Paris, who had acquired a large fortune in one of the French West India Islands, when somewhat advanced in life, resolved to share his fortune with a woman of merit; but not meeting with one to please him, he determined to apply to a personal friend and commercial correspondent in Paris:

Item.—Seeing that I have taken a resolution to marry, and that I do not find a suitable match for me here, do not fail to send by next ship bound hither a young woman of the qualifications and form following: As for a portion, I demand none. Let her be of an honest family, between twenty and twenty-five years of age, of a middle stature and well proportioned, her face agreeable, her temper mild, her character blameless, her health good, and her constitution strong enough to bear the change of the climate, that there be no occasion to look out for a second through lack of the first soon after she comes to hand, which must be provided against as much as possible, considering the great distance and the dangers of the sea. If she arrives here, conditioned as above said, with the present letter indorsed by you, or at least an attested copy thereof, that there may be no mistake or imposition, I hereby oblige and engage myself to satisfy the said letter by marrying the bearer at fifteen days' sight.

The Parisian merchant, who during a long life of commercial industry had never before had such a commission, read over and over this singular order, which put the future spouse of his friend on the same footing as the bales of goods he had to send to him. He endeavored, however, to execute his trust as faithfully as he could; and after many inquiries he thought he had found a lady who possessed the necessary qualifications in a young woman of reputable family, but without fortune, of good education and tolerably handsome. He made the proposal to her, as his friend had directed; and the young gentlewoman, who had no subsistence but from a cross old aunt who gave her a great deal of uneasiness, accepted it. A ship bound for the island was then fitting at Rochelle; the gentlewoman went on board it, together with the bales of goods, being well provided with all necessaries, and particularly with a certificate in due form and indorsed by the correspondent. She was also included in the invoice:

Item.—A young gentlewoman of twenty-five years of age, of the quality and shape, and conditioned, as per order, as appears by the affidavits and certificates she has to produce.

The writings which were thought necessary for so exact a man as her future husband were: An extract from the parish register; a certificate of her character, signed by the curate; an attestation of her neighbors, setting forth that she had, for the space of three years, lived with an old aunt who was intolerably peevish, and yet she had not during the whole of that time given her the least cause of complaint; the goodness of her constitution was certified by four physicians.

Previous to her departure on so singular an errand, the Parisian merchant sent letters of advice by other ships, to his friend, announcing that by such a ship he should send a young woman, describing her age, character, and appearance. The letters of advice, the bales, and the lady, all arrived safe in port; and the expectant merchant, who was one of the foremost on the pier, when she landed was gratified to see, in a handsome young woman, that his wishes had been attended to. The lady, being introduced, presented him with his correspondent's letter, indorsed: "The bearer of this is the spouse you ordered me to send you." A few days were devoted to courtship and to ascertaining each other's disposition, when the nuptial ceremony took place with great magnificence, and Martinique did not boast a happier couple than the one thus singularly united.

A Three-part Story... Part III
by
May Sinclair

Author of

"A Cure of Souls"



The
Immortal Moment

CHAPTER XVI.

IT was not from Marston, then, that she had to fear betrayal. Neither was she any more afraid of the rumors of the Cliff Hotel. She was aware that her engagement to Robert Lucy, unannounced but accepted for the simple fact it was, had raised her above censure and suspicion. Still she did feel a little uneasy when she thought of the Hankins.

She was thinking of them now as she and Robert sat on the cliff, making the most of their last hour together before the arrival of the little girls.

"Robert," she said, "the Hankins are probably sitting down there under the cliff. Supposing they see us?"

"They can't; we're over their heads."

"But, if they do, what do you suppose they'll think?"

"If they think at all, they'll have an inkling of the truth. But it isn't their business. The children will be here soon," he added.

She looked at him intently. Was he trying, she wondered, to reassure her

that the presence of his children would protect her? Or was he merely preoccupied with the thought of their arrival?

"You don't mind," he said presently, "not coming to the station?"

He had said that already twice before. Why ask, she said, when he knew perfectly well she didn't mind?

She looked at her watch.

"We've got another half hour before they come."

"Kitty, I believe you're afraid of them?"

"Yes, Robert, I'm afraid."

"What? Of two small children?"

"What are they like? I haven't asked you that."

"Well, Janet's a queer, uncanny little person, rather long for her age and very thin——"

"Like you?"

"Like me. At first you think she's all legs. Then you see a little white face with enormous eyes that look at you as if she was wondering what you are."

He smiled. His mind had gone off, away from her, to the contemplation of his little daughter.

"I think she's clever, but one never knows. We have to handle her very carefully. Barbara's all right. You can pitch her about like anything."

"What is—Barbara like?"

"Barbara? She's round and fat, and going to be pretty, like——"

"Like her mother?"

"No; like Janey, if Janey was fat. They're both a little difficult to manage. If you reprove Barbara she bursts out laughing in your face. If you even hint to Janet that you disapprove of her she goes away somewhere and weeps."

"Poor little thing! I'm afraid," said Kitty sadly, "they're not so very small."

"Well, Janet, I believe, is seven, and Barbara is five."

"Barbara is five. And, oh, dear me, Janet is seven."

"Is that such a very formidable age?"

She laughed uneasily. "Yes. That's the age when they begin to take notice, isn't it?"

"Oh, no, they do that when they're babies. Even Barbara's grown out of that. I say, Kitty, what a lot you know."

"Don't, Robert." She looked at him imploringly and put her hand in his.

"I won't, if you'll only tell me what I'm not to do."

"You're not to tease me about the things you think I don't know. I used to nurse my little sisters when I wasn't very big myself. I can't nurse Janet or Barbara, can I?"

"Why not?"

"They wouldn't let me. They're too old. It won't be the same thing at all."

"Well——" said Robert, and paused, hiding from her the thing that was in his mind.

"Oh, Robert, I do wish, I do wish they were really small."

"I'm sorry, Kitty. But perhaps——"

He could not hide anything from Kitty. "No, Robert," she said, "I'm afraid there won't be any perhaps. That's one of the things I meant to tell you. But I'm not bothering about that. I meant—if they were little—little things, I shouldn't be so dreadfully afraid of them."

"Why? What do you think they'll do to you, Kitty?"

"I—don't—know."

"You needn't be alarmed. I believe they're very well behaved. Jane has brought them up quite nicely."

"What is Jane going to do?"

"Ah—that's what I wanted to ask you about."

"You needn't ask me. You want her to stay and look after them just the same?"

"No, not just the same. I want her to stay, and she won't. She says it wouldn't be fair to you."

"But—if she only would, that would make it all so easy. You see, I could look after you, and she could look after them."

"You don't want to be bored with them?"

"You know that isn't what I mean. I don't want them to suffer."

"Why *should* they suffer?" There was some irritation in his tone.

"Because I don't think, Robert, I'm really fit to bring up children."

"I think you are. And I don't mean anybody else to bring them up. If you're my wife, Kitty, you're their mother."

"And they're to be mine as well as yours?"

"As much yours as you can make them, dear."

"Oh, how you trust me! That's what makes me so afraid. And—do you think they'll really love me?"

"Trust them—for that."

"You asked me if I could care for you, Robert; you never asked me if

I could care for them. You trusted me for that?"

"I could have forgiven you if you couldn't care for *me*."

"But you couldn't forgive me if I didn't care for them? Is that it?"

"No, I simply couldn't understand any woman not caring for them. I think you *will* like the little things, when you've seen them."

He looked at his watch. "I'm afraid I must be going."

She glanced at the hands of the watch over his shoulder. "You needn't," she said. "It isn't really time."

"Well—five minutes."

The five minutes went. "Time's up," he said.

"Oh, no, Robert—not yet."

"Kitty—don't you want to see them?"

"I don't want you to go."

"I'm coming back."

"Yes, but it won't be the same thing. It never will be the same thing as now."

"Poor Kitty! I say, I *must* go and meet them."

"Very well." She stood up. "Kiss me," she said.

She took his kiss as if it were the last that would be given her.

They went together to the hotel. Jane had started five minutes ago for the station.

"It's all right," he said. "I'll catch her up."

She followed to the gates and looked down the white road where Jane had gone.

"Let me come with you—just a little way—to the first lamp-post on the station road."

"Well, to the first lamp-post."

At the lamp-post she let him go.

She stood looking after him till he swung round the turn of the road, out of her sight. Then she went back, slowly, sad-eyed, and with a great terror in her heart.

CHAPTER XVII.

It was not the thing she had confessed to him, fear of his little unseen children; it was terror, unconfessed, uncomprehended, as it were foreknowledge of the very soul of destiny, clothed for her in their tender flesh and blood.

Up till now she had been careless of her destiny. She had been so joyous, so defiant in her sinning. By that charm of hers, younger than youth, indestructibly childlike, she had carried it through with the audacity of chartered innocence. She had propitiated, ignored, eluded the more feminine amenities of fate. Of course she had had her bad moments. She had been sorry, sometimes, and she had been sick; but on the whole her powers had been splendidly recuperative. She had shown none of those naked, tender spots that provoke destiny to strike. And with it all she had preserved, perhaps too scrupulously, the rules laid down for such as she. She had kept to her own place. She had never attempted to invade the sanctuaries set apart for other women.

It was Robert who had tempted her to that transgression. He had opened the door of the sanctuary for her and shut it behind her and put his back against it. He had made her believe that if she stayed in there, with him, it would be all right. She might have known what would happen. It was for such a moment, of infatuation made perfect, that destiny was waiting.

Kitty had no very luminous idea of its intentions. But she bore in her blood forebodings, older and obscurer than the flashes of the brain; and her heart had swift immortal instincts, fore-runners of the mortal hours. The powers of pain, infallibly wise, implacably just, would choose their moment well, striking at her through the hands of the children she had never borne.

If Robert found out what she was, before he married her, he would have to give her up, because of them. She knew better than he did the hold she had over him. She had tried to keep him in ignorance of her power, so great was her terror of what it might do to him, and to her through him. Yet, with all her sad science, she remained uncertain of his ultimate behavior. That was the charm and the danger of him. For fear of some undiscovered, uncalculated quality in him she had held herself back; she had been careful how she touched him, how she looked at him, lest her hands or her eyes should betray her; lest in his heart he should call her by her name, and fling her from him because of them.

Whereas, but for them, she judged that whatever she was he would not give her up. She was not quite sure—you couldn't say what a man like Robert would or wouldn't do—but she felt that if she could have had him to herself, if there had been only he and she, facing the world, then, for sheer chivalry, he simply couldn't have left her. Even now, once he was married to her it would be all right; he couldn't give her up or leave her; the worst he could do would be to separate her from them.

There was really no reason, then, why she should be frightened. He was going to marry her very soon. She knew that, by her science, though he had not said so. She would be all right. She would be very careful. It wasn't as if she didn't want to be nice and to do all the proper things.

And so Kitty cast off care.

Only, as she waited in the room prepared for the children, she looked at herself in the glass, once, to make sure that there was nothing in her face that could betray her. No; nature had spared her as yet, and her youth was good to her. Her face looked back at her, triumphantly reticent, innocent

of memory, holding her charm, a secret beyond the secrets of corruption, as her perfect body held the mystery and the prophecy of her power.

Besides, her face was different now from what it had been. Wilfrid had intimated to her that it was different. It was the face that Robert loved; it had the look that told him that she loved him, a look it never wore for any other man. Even now, as she thought of him, it lightened and grew rosy. She saw it herself, and wondered, and took hope.

"That's how I look when I'm happy, is it? I'm always happy when I'm with him, so," she reasoned, "he will always see me like that; and it will be all right."

Anyhow, there would be no unhappiness about his pretty lady when he came back with them.

She smiled softly as she went about the room, putting the touches of perfection to the festival. There were roses everywhere; on the table, on the mantelpiece; the room was sweet with the smell of them; there was a rose on each child's plate. The tremulous movements of her hands betrayed the immensity and the desperation of her passion to please.

The very waiter was touched by her, and smiled secretly in sympathy as he saw her laying her pretty lures. When he had gone she arranged the table all over again, and did it better. Then she stood looking at it, hovering round it, thinking. She would sit here, and the children there, Janet between her and Robert, Barbara between her and Jane.

"Poor little things," she said, "poor little things." She yearned to them even in her fear of them, and when she thought of them sitting there her lips moved in unspoken, pitiful endearments.

The light from the southwest streamed into the little room and made it golden. Everything in it shimmered

and shone. The window, flung wide open to the veranda, framed the green lawn and the shining, shimmering sea. A wind, small and soft, stirred the thin curtains to and fro, fanning the warm air. The sunlight and heat oppressed her. She shut her eyes and put her hands over them to cool them with darkness. It was a trick she had when she was troubled.

She sat by the window and waited in the strange, throbbing darkness of hot eyes closed in daylight, a darkness smitten by the sun and shot with a fiery fume.

They were coming now. She heard feet on the gravel outside, round the corner; she heard Robert's voice and Janey's; and then little, shuffling footsteps at the door, and two voices shrill and sweet.

Robert came in first, and the children with him. They stood all three on the threshold, looking at her. Robert was smiling, but the little girls—they were very little—were grave. His eyes drew her and she came toward them as she was used to come to the things of her desire, swift and shy, with a trailing, troubling movement; the way that he had seen her come, swayed by the rhythm of impulse.

The children stood stock-still as she stooped to them. Her fear of them made her supremely gentle. Little Barbara put up her round rose face with its soft mouth thrust forward in a premature kiss. Janet gave her a tiny hand and gazed at her with brooding, irresponsible eyes. Her little mouth never moved as Kitty's mouth touched it.

But little Barbara held out her spade and bucket for Kitty to see.

"Look, look," said little Barbara. "Daddy gave them me to build castles in the sand."

Barbara spoke so fast that she panted, and laughed in a divine superfluity of joy.

Robert stood looking down from his tremendous height at Barbara, tenderly, as one who contemplates a thing at once heartrending and absurd. Then his eyes turned to Kitty, smiling quietly as if they said:

"Didn't I tell you to wait until you'd seen them?"

Kitty's heart contracted with a sharp, abominable pang.

Then Janey took the little girls to the room upstairs where their nurse was. Barbara looked back at Kitty as she went, but Kitty's eyes followed Janet.

"Robert," she said, "will she always look at me like that? Shall I never know what she's thinking?"

"None of us know what Janet's thinking."

He paused.

"I told you we had to be very careful of her."

"Is she delicate?"

"No. Physically, she's far stronger than Barbara. She's what you'd call morally delicate."

She flushed. "What do you mean, Robert?"

"Well—not able to bear things. For instance, we'd a small child staying with us once. It turned out that she wasn't a nice child at all. We didn't know it, though. But Janet had a perfect horror of her. It's as if she had a sort of intuition. She was so unhappy about it that we had to send the child away."

His forehead was drawn with a frown of worry and perplexity.

"I don't see how she's to grow up. It makes me feel so awfully responsible. The world isn't an entirely pretty place, you know, and it seems such a cruel shame to bring a child like that into it. Doesn't it?"

"Yes."

"Somehow I think you'll understand her, Kitty."

"Yes, Robert, I understand."

She came to him. She laid her hand

on the sleeve of his coat and stood by him. Her eyes were shining through some dew that was not tears.

"What is it, Kitty?"

"Will you marry me soon?" she said. "Very soon," she whispered. "I—I can't wait." She hid her face against his arm.

"Why should we wait? Do you suppose I want to?"

"Hush!" she said. "They're coming."

They came a little solemnly, as be-seemed a festival. Janet, in her long white pinafore, looked more than ever the spiritual thing she was. Her long brown hair hung down her cheeks, straight and smooth as a parted veil, sharpening her small face that flickered as a flame flickers in troubled air. Beside her, little Barbara bloomed and glowed, with cheeks full blown and cropped head flowering into curls that stood on end in brown tufts, and tawny feathers, and little crests of gold. They took their places, pensively, at the table.

All through tea time little Barbara, pursued by her dream, talked incessantly of castles in the sand. And when she was tired of talking she began to sing.

"Darling," said Jane, "we don't sing at tea time."

"I do," said little Barbara, and laughed.

Jane laughed, too, hysterically.

Then the spirit of little Barbara entered into Jane and made her ungovernably gay. It passed into Kitty and ran riot in her blood and nerves. Whenever Barbara laughed Kitty laughed, and when Kitty laughed Robert laughed, too. Even Janet gave a little shriek now and then. The children thought it was all because they had had strawberries and cream for tea and were going down to the sea to build castles in the sand.

All afternoon, till dinner time, Kitty labored on the sands, building castles

as if she had never done anything else in her life. The Hankins watched her from their seat on the rocks in the angle of the cliff.

"We were mistaken. She must be all right. How pretty she is, too, poor thing," said Mrs. Hankin to her husband.

All afternoon Janet had clung to Jane. But when bedtime came Robert took her aside and whispered something to her. Going home she walked by Kitty and put her hand in hers.

"Daddy said I'm to be very kind to you."

"Did he? That's very kind of daddy."

"Daddy's always kind to people. Especially when they've not been very happy. Really and truly I'm going to be kind. But you won't mind if I don't love you *very* soon, will you?"

"Of course I won't. Only don't leave it too late, darling."

"Well, I don't know," said Janet thoughtfully; "we've lots of time."

"Have we?"

"Heaps and heaps. You see, I love Auntie Janey, and it might hurt her feelings."

"I see."

"But I'm going to give you something," said Janet presently.

"I don't want you to give me anything that belongs to Auntie Janey."

"No," said Janet, "I shall give you something of my own."

"Oh! And you can't tell me what it's going to be?"

"I must think about it." The little girl became lost in thought. "Barbara likes kissing people. I don't."

"So I see. It won't be kisses, then?"

"No, it won't be kisses. It will," she reiterated, "be something of my own." She dropped Kitty's hand.

"You won't mind if I go to Auntie Janey now?"

Kitty told Janey about it afterward,

as they sat alone in the lounge before dinner.

"She's like Robert, isn't she?"

"Very like Robert."

She brooded. "Janey," she said, "let me have him to myself this evening."

All evening she had him to herself, out on the cliff, in the place where nobody came but they.

"Well," he said, "what do you think of them?"

"I think they're adorable."

"Funny little beggars, aren't they? How did you get on with Janet?"

She told him.

"That's Janet's little way—to give you something of her own." He smiled in tender satisfaction, repeating the child's phrase.

"It's all right, Kitty. She's only holding herself in. You're in for a big thing."

She surveyed it.

"I know, Robert. I know."

"You're tired? Have the children been too much for you?"

She shook her head.

"You're not to make yourself a slave to them, you know."

She looked at him. "Was I all right, Robert?"

"You were perfect."

"You said I was only a child myself."

"So you are. That's why I like you."

She shook her head again.

"It's all very well," she said, "but that isn't what you want, dear—another child."

"How do you know what I want?"

"You want somebody much nicer than I am."

He was silent, looking at her as he had looked at Barbara, enjoying her absurdity, letting her play, like the child she was, with her preposterous idea.

"Oh, Robert, you do *really* think I'm nice?" She came nearer to him, crying out like a child in pain. He put

his arm round her and comforted her as best he could.

"You child, do you suppose I'd marry you if I didn't think you nice?"

"You might. You mightn't care."

"As it happens, I do care, very much. Anyhow, I wouldn't ask you to be a mother to my children if I didn't think you nice. That's the test."

"Yes, Robert," she repeated. "That's the test."

They rose and went back to the hotel. From the lawn they could see the open window of the children's room. They looked up.

"Would you like to see them, Kitty?"

"Yes."

He took her up to them. They were asleep. Little Barbara lay curled up in the big bed, right in the middle of it, where her dreams had tossed her. Janet, in the cot beside her, lay very straight and still.

Robert signed to Kitty to come near, and they stood together and looked first at the children and then into each other's face. Kitty was very quiet.

"Do you like them?" he whispered.

Her lips quivered, but she made no sign.

He stooped over each bed, smoothing the long hair from Janet's forehead, folding back the blanket that weighed on Barbara's little body. When he turned Kitty had gone. She had slipped into her own room.

She went into her own room, and threw herself on her bed and writhed there, torn by many pangs. The pang of the heart and the pang of the half-born spirit, struggling with the body that held it back from birth; and through it all the pang of the motherhood she had thwarted and disowned. Out of the very soil of corruption it pierced, sharp and pure, infinitely painful. It was almost indiscernible from the fierce exultation of her heart that had found fulfillment, and from the pas-

sion of her body that yet waited for its own.

She undressed herself and crept into her bed and lay there, tortured, visited by many memories. She gazed with terrified, pitiful eyes into a darkness that was peopled for her with all the faces she had known in the brief seasons of her sinning: men, and the women who had been her friends and her companions, and the strangers who had passed her by, or who had lingered and looked on. The faces of Robert and his children hung somewhere on the outskirts of her vision, but she could not fix them or hold them; they were trampled out, obliterated by that phantasmal procession of her shames.

Some faces, more terrible than the rest, detached themselves and crowded round her, the faces of those who had pursued her, and of those whom her own light feet pursued; from the first who had found her and left her to the last whom she herself had held captive and let go. They stood about her bed; they stretched out their hands and touched her; their faces peered into hers; faces that she had forgotten.

She thrust them from her into the darkness and they came again. Each bore the same likeness to his fellow; each had the same looks, the same gestures that defied her to forget. She fell asleep; and the dreams, the treacherous, perpetually remembering, delivered her into their hands.

She waked at dawn, with memory quickened by her dreams. She heard voices now, all the voices that had accused her. Her mother's voice spoke first, and it was very sad. It said: "I am sending you away, Kitty, because of the children." Then her father's voice, very stern: "No, I will not have you back. You must stay where you are for your little sisters' sake." And her mother's voice again—afterward—sad and stern, too, this time: "As you've

made your bed, Kitty, you must lie. We can't take you back."

And there was a third voice. It said very softly: "You can't have it both ways." It cried out aloud in a fury: "I've always known it. You can't hide it. You're full of it." And yet another voice, deep and hard: "You can't *not* tell him. It's a shame, Kitty; it's an awful shame."

She could not sleep again for listening to them.

CHAPTER XVIII.

It was morning. She dragged herself up and tried to dress. But her hands shook and her head ached violently. She stretched herself half dressed upon her bed and lay there helpless, surrendered to the bodily pain that delivered her mercifully from the anguish of her mind.

She saw no one, not even Jane Lucy.

Outside, in the passage, and in the inner room she heard the footsteps of the children and their little, shrill voices; each sound accentuated the stabbing pulse of pain. It was impossible to darken the room, and the insufferable sunlight poured in unchecked through the thin yellow blinds and plagued her brain, till the nerves of vision throbbed, beat for beat, with the nerves of torment. At noon she had only one sensation of brilliant, surging pain.

She dozed and her headache lifted. When she woke her body was weak as if it had had a fever, but her mind closed on reality with the impact of a force delayed.

There was a thing not yet quite real to her, a thing that seemed to belong to the region of bodily pain, to be born there as a bad dream might be born; a thing that had been there last night among the other things, that, as she stared at it, became more prominent, more poignant than they. And yet, though its air was so beckoning and so

familiar, it was not among the number of things accomplished and irrevocable. It was simply the thing she had to do.

It possessed her now; and under its dominion she was uplifted, carried along. Her mind moved toward it with a reckless, rocking speed, the perilous certainty of the insane.

At five o'clock she got up and dressed herself and sent a message to Robert Lucy to see her downstairs in her sitting room, alone. As she stood at her glass, she said to herself:

"How shocking I look. But he won't mind."

At six he was with her.

She drew her hand away from his as if his touch had hurt her. Her smile was the still, bloodless smile that comes with pain. She drew her chair back out of the sunlight, in the recess by the fireplace. He stood beside her then, looking at her with eyes that loved her the more for the sad hurt done to her beauty. His manner recalled the shy adolescent uncertainty of his first approaches.

"Don't you think," he said, "you ought to have stayed in bed?"

She shook her head and struggled to find her voice. It came convulsively.

"No. I'm better. I'm all right now."

"It was being out in that beastly hot sun yesterday—with those youngsters. You're not used to it."

She laughed. "No. I'm not used to it. Robert—you haven't told them, have you?"

"What?"

"About you—and me?"

"No. Not yet." He smiled. "I say, I shall have to tell them very soon, shan't I?"

"You needn't."

He made some inarticulate sound that questioned her.

"I've changed my mind. I can't marry you."

He had to bend his head to catch her low, indistinct murmur; but he caught it.

He drew back from her, and leaned against the chimneypiece, and looked at her more intently than before.

"Do you mean," he said quietly, "because of *them*?"

"Yes."

He looked down.

"Poor Kitty!" he said. "You think I'm asking too much of you?"

She didn't answer.

"You're afraid?"

"I told you I was afraid."

"Yes. But I thought it was all right. I thought you liked them."

She was silent. Tears rose to her eyes and hung on their unsteady lashes.

"They like you."

She bowed her head and the tears fell.

"Is that what's upset you?"

"Yes."

"I see. You've been thinking it over and you find you can't stand it. I don't wonder. You've let those little monkeys tire you out. You've nearly got a sunstroke, and you feel as if you'd rather die than go through another day like yesterday. Well, you shan't. There'll never be another day like yesterday."

"No. Never," she said, and her sobs choked her.

"Why should there be? They'll have a governess. You don't suppose I meant you to have them on your hands all the time?"

She went on crying softly. He sat on the arm of her chair and put his arm round her and dried her eyes.

"Don't be unhappy about it, Kitty. I understand. You're not marrying them, dear; you're marrying me."

She broke loose from him.

"I can't marry you," she cried. "I can't give you what you want."

"Do you mean that you don't care for me? Is that what you're trying to tell me all the time?"

He moved and she cowered back into her chair.

"I—I can't tell you."

He had turned from her. He was leaning his arms along the mantel-shelf; he had bowed his head on them.

They remained for some minutes so; she cowering back; he with his face hidden from her.

"Do you mind telling me," he said presently, "if there's anybody else that you——"

"That I care for? No, Robert, there's no one."

"Are you quite sure? Quite honest? Think."

"Do you mean Wilfrid Marston?"

"Yes."

"I certainly do not care for *him*."

He raised his head at that; but he did not look at her.

"Thank God!" he said.

"Do you think as badly of him as all that?"

"Don't ask me what I think of him."

"Would you think badly of me if I'd married him?"

"I—I couldn't have stood it, Kitty."

"I am not going to marry him."

"You haven't said yet that you don't care for me?"

"No. I haven't."

He turned and stooped over her, compelling her to look at him.

"Say it then," he said.

She drew back her face from his and put up her hands between them. He rose and stood before her and looked down at her. The blue of her eyes had narrowed, the pupils stared at him, black and feverish. Her mouth, which had been tight shut, was open slightly. A thin flush blurred its edges. Her breath came through, short and sharp.

"You're ill," he said. "You must go back to bed."

"No," she said. "I've got to tell you something."

"If you do, I shan't believe it."

"What won't you believe?"

"That you don't care for me. I can't believe it."

"You'd better, Robert."

"I don't. There's something wrong. You must tell me what it is."

"There's nothing wrong but that. I—I made a mistake."

"You only thought you liked me? Or is it worse than that?"

"It's worse, far worse."

"I see. You tried to like me. And you couldn't?"

She was silent.

"Poor child! I've been a selfish brute. I might have known you couldn't. You've hardly known me ten days. But if I wait, Kitty—if I give you time to think?"

"If you gave me ten years it would do no good."

"I see," he said. "I see."

He gripped the edge of the mantel-piece with both his hands, his tense arms trembled from the shoulders to the wrists, his hold relaxed. He straightened himself and hid his shaking hands in his coat pockets. There were tears at the edges of his eyelids, the small, difficult tears that cut their way through the flesh that abhors them.

She saw them.

"Ah, Robert—do you care for me like that?"

"You know how I care for you."

He stopped as he swung away from her, remembering that he had failed in courtesy.

"Thank you," he said simply, "for telling me the truth."

He reached the door; and she rose and came after him. He shook his head as a sign to her not to follow him. She saw that he was going from her because he was tortured and dumb with suffering and with shame.

Then she knew what she must do.

She called to him; she entreated.
"Robert—don't go. Come back—come back—I can't bear it."

He came back at that cry.

"I haven't told you the truth. I lied."

"When?" he said sternly.

"Just now. When I told you that I didn't care for you."

"Well?"

"Sit down. Here—on the sofa—I'll try and tell you."

He sat down, beside her, but not near. She leaned forward, with her elbows on her knees and her head propped on her clenched hands. She did not look at him as she spoke.

"I said I didn't care because I thought that was the easiest way out of it. Easiest for you. Easier than knowing the truth."

He smiled grimly. "Well—you see how easy it's been."

"Yes." She paused.

"The truth isn't going to be easy, either."

"Let's have it, all the same, Kitty."

"You're going to have it." She paused again, breathing hard. "Have you never wondered why the people here avoided me? You know they thought things."

"As if it mattered what they thought."

"They were right. There *was* something."

She heard him draw a deep breath. He, too, leaned forward now, in the same attitude as she, as if he were the participator of her confession and the accomplice in her shame. His face was level with hers, but his eyes looked straight past her, untainted and clear.

"What if there was?" he said. "It makes no difference."

She turned her sad face to his.

"Don't you know, Robert, don't you know?"

He frowned impatiently.

"No, I don't. I don't want to."

"You'd rather think I didn't care for you?"

His face set again in its tortured, dumb look.

"You shan't think that of me."

She leaned back again out of his sight; and he presented to her his shoulder, thrust forward, and his profile, immovable, dogged, and apparently unheeding.

"It's because I cared for you that I couldn't tell you the truth. I tried and couldn't. It was so difficult and you *wouldn't* understand. Then Wilfrid Marston said I must—I had to tell you."

He threw himself back and turned on her.

"What had Marston to do with it?"

Her voice and her eyes dropped.

"You see—he knew."

"I see."

He waited.

"I couldn't tell you."

His silence conveyed to her that he listened since she desired it, that he left it to her to tell him as much or as little as she would, and that thus he trusted her.

"I was afraid," she said.

"What? Afraid of *me*, Kitty?"

"I thought it would make you not care for me."

"I don't think anything you can tell me will make any difference."

"You said yourself it would. You said you wouldn't marry me if I wasn't nice."

He looked up impatient and surprised.

"But we've been through all that," he said.

"No, we haven't. When I said I wasn't nice I meant that there were things I——"

"Well?"

"I—I wasn't married to Charley Tailleur."

He took it in silence; and through the silence she let it sink in.

"Where is the fellow?" he asked presently.

"He's dead. I told you *that*."

"I'd forgotten."

There was another silence.

"Did you care for him very much, Kitty?"

"I don't know. Yes. No, I don't know. It wasn't the same thing."

"Never mind. It's very good of you to tell me."

"I didn't mean to."

"What made you tell me?"

"Seeing the children. I thought I could go on deceiving you; but when I saw them I knew I couldn't."

"I see." His voice softened. "You've told me because of them. I'm glad you told me." He paused on that.

"Well," he said, "we must make the best of it."

"That makes no difference?"

"No. Not now."

She sighed.

"How long ago was it?" he asked.

"Five years. Charley Tailleur was the first."

"What?"

"The first. There were others. Ever so many others. I'm—that sort."

"I don't believe you."

"You've got to believe me. You can't marry me, and you've got to see why."

She also paused. Her silences were terrible to him.

"I thought you did see once. It didn't seem possible that you couldn't. Do you remember the first time I met you?"

He remembered.

"I thought you saw then. And afterward—don't you remember how you followed me out of the room—another night?"

"Yes."

"I thought you understood—and were too shy to say so. But you didn't. *Then*—do you remember how I waited for you at the end of the garden—and how

we sat out on the cliff? I was trying then—the way I always try. I thought I'd make you—and you—you wouldn't see it. You only wanted to help me. You were so innocent and dear. That's what made me love you."

"Oh!" he groaned. "Don't!"

But she went on. "And do you remember how you found me—that night—out on the cliff?"

She drew back her voice softly.

"I was sure then that you knew, and that when you asked me to come back with you——"

"Look here, Kitty, I've had enough of it."

"You haven't, for you're fond of me still. You are, aren't you?"

"Oh, my God, how do I know?"

"I know. It's because you haven't taken it in. What do you think of this? You've known me ten days, and ten days before that I was with Wilfrid Marston."

He had taken it in at last. She had made it real to him, clothed it in flesh and blood.

"If you don't believe me," she said, "ask him. That's what he came to see me for. He wanted me to go back to him. In fact, I wasn't supposed to have left him."

He put his hand to his forehead as if he were trying to steady his mind to face the thing that had stunned it.

"And you're telling me all this because——" he said dully.

"Because I want to make you loathe me, so that you can go away and be glad that you'll never see me again. And if it hurts you too much to think of me as I am, just say to yourself that I cared for you, and that I couldn't have done that if I'd been quite bad." She cried out. "It would have been better for me if I had been. I shouldn't *feel* then. It wouldn't hurt me to see little children. I should have got over that long ago and I shouldn't have cared for you or them. I shouldn't have been

able to. And then—I needn't have let you care for me. That was the worst thing I ever did. But I was so happy—so happy."

He could not look at her. He covered his face with his hands and she knew that he cared still.

Then she came and knelt down beside him and whispered. He got up and broke away from her and she followed him.

"You can't marry me *now*," she said. And he answered: "No."

CHAPTER XIX.

He did not leave her. They sat still, separated by the length of the little room, staring, not at each other but at some point in the distance, as if each brain had flung and fixed there the same unspeakable symbol of its horror.

Her face, sharp with pain, was strangely purified, spiritualized by the immortal moment that uplifted her. His face, grown old in a moment, had lost its look of glad and incorruptible innocence.

Not that he was yet in full possession of reality. His mind was sunk in the stupor that follows after torture. It kept its hold by one sense only, the vague discerning of profound responsibility, and of something profounder still, some tie binding him to Kitty, immaterial, indestructible, born of their communion in pain.

It kept him, by its intangible compulsion, sitting there in the same small room, divided from her, but still there, still wearing that strange air of participation, of complicity.

And, all the time, he kept saying to himself: "What next?"

There was a knock at the door.

"It's Jane," he said. "I'll tell her not to come in." His voice sounded hoarse and unlike his own.

"Oh, mayn't I see her?"

He looked up with his clouded eyes.

"Do you want to?"

"Yes."

He considered. He hesitated.

"Do you mind?"

"Mind?" he repeated. As if, after what they had gone through, there could ever be anything to mind. It seemed to him that things would always henceforth be unsubstantial, and events utterly unimportant. He tried with an immense effort to grasp this event of Jane's appearance and of Kitty's attitude to Jane.

"I thought," he said, "perhaps she would bother you."

The knock came again.

"Robert," she said, "I don't want her to know—what I told you."

"Of course not," he said. "Come in."

Jane came in and closed the door behind her. She had a letter folded tightly in her hand. She stood there a moment, looking from one to the other. It was Kitty who spoke.

"Come in, Janey," she said. "I want you."

Jane came forward and stood between them. She looked at Robert, who hardened his face, and at Kitty, who was trembling.

"Has anything happened?" she said. And Kitty answered: "No. Nothing will happen now. I've just told him that it can't."

"You've given him up?"

"Yes. I've—given—him up."

She drew in her breath on the "Yes," so that it sounded like a sob. The other words came slowly from her, one by one, as if she repeated them by rote, without knowing what they meant.

Jane turned to her brother. "And you've let her do it?"

He was silent, still saying to himself: "What next?"

"Of course he's let me. He knows it was the only thing I could do."

"Kitty—what made you do it?"

Kitty closed her eyes. Robert saw her and gave a low, inarticulate sound

of misery. Jane heard it and understood.

"Kitty," she said, "have you made him believe you don't care for him?"

She sat down on the couch beside her and covered her hands with her own.

"It isn't true, Robert," she said. "She doesn't know what she's doing. Kitty, tell him it isn't true."

The trembling hands broke loose from her. Kitty sobbed once and was still. At the sound Robert turned on Jane.

"Leave her alone," he said. "She doesn't want to be bothered about it now."

Kitty's hand moved back along the couch to Jane. "No," she said, "don't make her leave me. I'm going away so soon."

He started at that answer to his question, "What next?"

"Tell me what made you do it," said Jane again.

"Whatever it was," he said, "she's doing perfectly right."

"I know what she's doing. And I know why she's doing it. Can't you see why?"

Robert, who had stood looking at her helplessly, turned away at the direct appeal and walked up and down, up and down the room. He was still saying to himself: "And if she goes, what next?"

"She doesn't mean it, Robert. It's these wretched people who had driven her to it with the abominable things they've said and thought. You *can't* let her give you up. Don't you see that it'll look as if you didn't believe in her? And he does believe in you, Kitty, dear. He doesn't care what anybody says."

"Leave it alone, Janey. You don't know what you're talking about. You don't even know what it is they say."

"I do," said Jane. She rose and went to her brother and thrust the letter she held into his hand. "Look there, that came just now."

He glanced at the letter, lit a match and set fire to it, and dropped the ashes into the grate.

"Look at him, Kitty, look at him!" she cried triumphantly.

"What was in that letter?"

"Nothing that matters."

"Who wrote it?"

"Nobody who matters in the very least."

"Was it Mr. Marston? Tell me."

"No."

"He wouldn't," said Kitty thoughtfully. "It's women who write letters. It must have been Grace Keating. She hates me."

"I know she hates you. Do you see now why Kitty's giving you up?"

"She has told me herself, Janey. She may have more reasons than you know."

"She has none, none that I don't know. They're all there in that letter which you've burned. Can't you see why it was written?"

"Does it matter why?"

"Yes, it does matter. It was written to make you give Kitty up. There's no reason why I should spare the woman who wrote it. She hates Kitty—because she wanted you for herself. Kitty knows that she's slandered her. She did it before she went, to her face, and Kitty forgave her. And now the poor child thinks that she'll let you go, and just creep away quietly and hide herself—from *that*. And you'll let her do it? You believe her when she says she doesn't care for you? If that isn't caring—why, it's *because* she cares for you, and cares for your honor more than she does for her own, poor darling—"

"I know, Janey. And she knows I know."

"Then where's your precious honor if you don't stand up for her? She's got nobody but you, and if you don't defend her from that sort of thing—"

She stood before him, flaming, and

Kitty rose and put herself between them.

"He can't defend me, Janey. It's the truth."

CHAPTER XX.

She had left them to each other. It was eight o'clock. She had crept back again to the bed that was her refuge, where she had lain for the last hour, weeping to exhaustion. She had raised herself at the touch of a hand on her hot forehead. Jane was standing beside her.

"Kitty," she said, "will you see Robert for a moment? He's waiting for you downstairs in your room."

Kitty dropped back again on her pillow with her arm over her face, warding off Jane's gaze.

"No," she said, "I can't see him. I can't go through that again."

"But, Kitty, there's something he wants to say to you."

"There's nothing he can say. Nothing—nothing. Tell him I'm going away."

"You mustn't go without seeing him."

"I must. It's the only way."

"For you—yes. How about him?"

Kitty sighed. She stirred irresolutely on her pillow.

"No, no," she said. "I've done it once. I can't do it all over again."

"I suppose," said Jane, "it is easier—not to see him."

At that Kitty clenched her hands. "Easier?" she cried. "I'd give my soul to see him for one minute—one minute, Janey."

She turned, stifling her sobs on her pillow. They ceased and the passion that was in her had its way then. She lay on her face, convulsed, biting into the pillow, gripping the sheets, tearing at them and wringing them in her hands. Her whole body writhed, shaken and tormented.

"Oh, go away!" she cried. "Go away! Don't look at me!"

But Jane did not go. She stood there by the bedside.

She had come to the end of her adventure. It was as if she had been brought there blindfold, carried past the border into the terrible, alien, unpenetrated lands. Her genius for exploration had never taken her within reasonable distance of them. She had turned back when the frontier was in sight, refusing all knowledge of the things that lay beyond. And here she was, in the very thick of it, at the heart of the unexplored, with her poor, terrified eyes uncovered, her face held close to the thing she feared.

And yet she had passed through the initiation without terror; she had held her hand in the strange fire and it had not hurt her. She felt only a great, penetrating, comprehending, incorruptible pity for her sister who writhed there, consumed and tortured in the flame.

She knelt by the bedside and stretched out her arm and covered her, and Kitty lay still.

"You haven't gone," she said.

"No, Kitty."

Kitty moved; she sat up and put her hands to her loosened hair.

"I'll see him now," she said.

Kitty slid her feet to the floor. She stood up, steadying herself by the bedside.

Jane looked at her and her heart was wrung with compassion.

"No," she said. "Wait till you're better. I'll tell him."

But Kitty was before her at the door, leaning against it.

"I shall never be better," she said. Her smile was ghastly. She turned to Jane on the open threshold. "He hasn't got the children with him, has he? I don't want to see them."

"You won't see them."

"Can't he come to me?"

She peered down the passage, and

drew back, and Jane knew that she was afraid of being seen.

"There's nobody about," she said; "they're all in the dining room."

Still Kitty hesitated. "Will you come with me?" she said.

Then Jane took her hand and led her to the room where Robert was and left her with him.

He stood by the hearth, waiting for her. His head was bowed, but his eyes, as she entered, lifted and fixed themselves on her. There had gone from him that air of radiant and unconquerable youth, of innocence, expectant and alert. Instead of it, he, too, wore the mark of experience, of initiation that had meant torture.

"I hope," he said, "you are rested."

"Oh, yes."

She stood there, weak and drooping, leaning her weight on one slender hand, spread, palm downward, on the table.

He drew out a chair for her, and removed his own to the other side of the table, keeping that barrier between them. In his whole manner there was a terrible constraint.

"You've eaten nothing," he said.

Neither had he, she gathered, nor Jane. The trouble she had brought on them was jarring, dislocating, like the shock of bereavement. They had behaved as if in the presence of the beloved dead.

And yet, though he held himself apart, she knew that he had not sent for her to cast her off; that he was yet bound to her by the mysterious, infrangible tie; that he seemed to himself, in some way, her partner and accomplice.

Their silence was a link that bound them, and she broke it.

"Well," she said, "have you something to say to me?"

"Yes." His hands, spread out on the table between them, trembled. "I have, only it seems so little——"

"Does it? Well, of course, there isn't much to be said."

"Not much. There aren't any words to—— Only I don't want you to think that I don't realize what you've done. It was magnificent."

He answered her look of stupefied inquiry.

"Your courage, Kitty, in telling me the truth."

"Oh, that. Don't let's talk about it."

"I am not going to talk about it. But I want you to understand that what you told me has made no difference in my—in my feeling for you."

"It must."

"It hasn't. And it never will. And I want to know what we're going to do next."

"Next?" she repeated.

"Yes, next. *Now.*"

"I'm going away. There's nothing else left for me to do."

"And I, Kitty? Do you think I'm going to let you go, without——"

She stopped him. "You can't help yourself."

"What? You think I'm brute enough to take everything you've given me, and to—to let you go like this?"

His hands moved as if they would have taken hers and held them. Then he drew back.

"There's one thing I can't do for you, Kitty. I can't marry you, because it wouldn't be fair to my children."

"I know, Robert, I know."

"I know you know. I told you nothing would ever make any difference. If it wasn't for them I'd ask you to marry me to-morrow. I'm only giving you up, as you're giving me up, because of them. But, if I can't marry you I want you to let me make things a little less hard for you."

"How?"

"Well, for one thing, I don't believe you've anything to live on."

"What makes you think that?"

"Marston told me that if you married you forfeited your income. I sup-

pose that meant that you had nothing of your own."

"It did."

"You've nothing?"

"My father would give me fifty pounds a year if I kept straight. But he can't afford it. It means that my little sisters go without dresses."

"And you've no home, Kitty?"

She shook her head. "They can't have me at home, you see."

He sighed.

"If I looked after you, Kitty, do you think you would keep straight? If I made a home for you somewhere, where you won't be too unhappy?"

"You mean you'd take care of me?"

"Yes. As far as I can."

Her face flushed deeply.

"No," she said. "No. I mustn't let you do that."

"Why not? It's nothing, Kitty. It's the least that I can do. And you'd be very lonely."

"I would. I would be miserable—in between."

"Between?"

"When you weren't there."

"Kitty, dear child, I can't be there."

She shrank back; the flush died out of her face and left it white.

"I see. You didn't mean that I was to live with you?"

"Poor child—no."

"I—I didn't understand."

"No," he said gently, "no."

"You see how hopeless I am?"

"I see what my responsibility would be if I left you to yourself."

"And—*what* do you want to do?"

"I want to provide for you and your future."

"Dear Robert, you can't possibly provide—for either."

"I can. I've got a little house in the country, if you'll take it, and I can spare enough out of my income."

She smiled. "You can't afford it."

"If I could afford to marry, I could afford that."

"I see. It's a beautiful scheme, Robert. And in the little house where I'm to live, will you come sometimes and see me?"

"I think it would be better not."

"And what am I to do, if—if things are too hard for me? And if you are the only one?"

"Then you're to send for me."

"I see. I've only to send for you and you'll come?"

"Of course I'll come."

"When I can't bear it any longer am I to send for you?"

"You're to send for me when you're in any trouble or any difficulty—or any danger."

"And the way out of the trouble—and the difficulty—and the danger?"

"Between us we shall find the way."

"No, Robert. Between us we shall lose it. And we shall never, never find it again."

"You can't trust me, Kitty?"

"I can't trust myself. I know how your scheme would work. I let you do this thing; I go away and live in the dear little house you'll give me; and I let you keep me there, and give me all my clothes and things. And you think that's the way to stop me thinking about you and caring for you? I shall be there, eating my heart out. What else can I do, when everything I put on or have about me reminds me of you, every minute of the day? I'm to look to you for everything, but never to see you until I can bear it no longer. How long do you think I shall bear it? A woman made like me? You know perfectly well what the trouble and the difficulty and the danger are. I shall be in it all the time. And some day I shall send for you and you'll come. Oh, yes, you'll come, for you'll be in it, too. It won't be a bit easier for you than it is for me."

She paused.

"You'll come. And you know what the end of that will be."

"You think no other end is possible between a man and a woman?"

"If I do it's men who have made me think it."

"Have I, Kitty?"

"No. Not you. I don't say your plan wouldn't work with some other woman. I say it's impossible between you—and me."

"Because you won't believe that I might behave differently from some other men?"

"You *are* different. And I mean to keep you so."

She rose.

"There's only one way," she said. "We must never see each other again. We mustn't even *think*. I shall go away, and you're not to come after me."

"When?"

"To-morrow. Perhaps to-night."

"And where, Kitty?"

"I don't know."

"You shan't go," he said. "I'll go. You must stay here until we can think of something."

She closed her eyes and drew a hard sigh, as if exhausted with the discussion.

"Robert, dear, would you mind not talking any more to me? I'm very tired."

"If I leave you, will you go to bed and rest?"

"I think so. You can say good night."

He rose and came toward her.

"No—don't say it," she cried. "Don't speak to me."

She drew back and put her hands behind her as a sign that he was not to touch her.

He stood a moment looking at her. And as he looked at her he was afraid, even as she was. He said to himself that in that moment she was wise and

had done well. For his heart hardly knew its pity from its passion, and its passion from its fear.

And she, seeing that she stood between him and the door, turned aside and made his way clear for him.

And so he left her.

CHAPTER XXI.

She stared at her own face in the glass without seeing it. Her brain was filled with the loud, hurried ticking of the clock. It sounded somehow as if it were out of gear. She felt herself swaying slightly as she stood.

She was not going to faint bodily. It seemed to her rather that the immaterial bonds, the unseen, subtle, intimate connections were letting go their hold. Her soul was the heart of the danger. It was there that the traveling powers of dissolution, accelerated, multiplying, had begun their work and would end it. Its moments were not measured by the ticking of the clock.

She had remained standing as Lucy had left her, with her back to the door he had gone out by. She was thus unaware that a servant of the hotel had come in, that he had delivered some message and was waiting for her answer.

She started as the man spoke to her again. With a great effort her brain grasped and repeated what he had said.

"Mr. Marston."

No, she was certainly not going to faint. There was no receding of sensation. It was resurgence and invasion, violence shaking the very doors of life. She heard the light, tremulous tread of the little pulses of her body, scattered by the ringing hammer strokes of her heart and brain. She heard the clock ticking out of gear, like the small, irritable pulse of time.

She steadied her voice to answer.

"Very well. Show him in."

Marston's face as he approached her

was harder and stiffer than ever; his bearing more uncompromisingly upright and correct. He greeted her with that peculiar deference that he showed to women whose acquaintance he had yet to make. Decency required that he should start on a fresh and completely purified footing with the future Mrs. Robert Lucy.

"It's charming of you," he said, "to let me come in."

"I wanted to see you, Wilfrid."

Something in her tone made him glance at her with a look that restored her for a moment to her former place.

"That is still more charming," he replied.

"I've done what you told me. I've given—him up."

A heavy flush spread over his face and relaxed the hard tension of the muscles.

"I thought you'd do it."

"Well, I have done it." She paused. "That's all I had to say to you."

Her voice struck at him like a blow. But he bore it well, smiling his hard, reticent smile.

"I knew you'd do it," he repeated. "But I didn't think you'd do it quite so soon. Why did you?"

"You know why."

"I didn't mean to put pressure on you, Kitty. It was *your* problem. Still, I'm glad you've seen it in the right light."

"You think you made me see it?"

"I should hope you'd see it for yourself. It was obvious."

"What was obvious?"

"The unsuitability of the entire arrangement. Was it likely you'd stick to it when you saw what you were in for?"

"You think I tired of him?"

"I think you saw possibilities of fatigue; and like a wise child you chucked it. It's as well you did it before instead of after. I say, how did Lucy take it?"

She did not answer. His smile flickered and died under the oppression of her silence.

"Have you done with him altogether? He didn't suggest—er—any compromise?"

"He did not."

"He wouldn't. Compromise is foreign to his nature."

He sat leaning forward, contemplating with apparent satisfaction his own strong-grained, immaculate hands. From time to time he tapped the floor with a nervous movement of his foot.

"Then," he said presently, "if that's so, there's no reason, is there, why you shouldn't come back to me?"

"I can't come back to you. I told you so yesterday."

"Since yesterday the situation has altered considerably. Or, rather, it remains precisely where it was before."

"No, Wilfrid. Things can never be as they were before."

"Why not? If I choose to ignore this episode, this little aberration on your part? You must be equally anxious to forget it. In which case we may consider our relations uninterrupted."

"Do you think I gave Robert Lucy up to go back to you?"

"My dear Kitty, if I'm willing to take you back after you gave *me* up for him, I think my attitude almost constitutes a claim."

"A claim?"

"Well, let's say it entitles me to a hearing. You don't seem to realize in the least my extreme forbearance. I never reproached you. I never interfered between you and Lucy. You can't say I didn't play the game."

"I'm not saying it. I know you didn't betray me."

"Betray you? My dear child, I helped you. I never dreamed of standing in your way as long as there was a chance of your marrying. Now that there is none——"

"That has nothing to do with it. I told you that I wouldn't go back to you in any case."

"Come, I don't propose to throw you over for any other woman. Surely it would be more decent to come back to me than to go off with some other man, Heaven knows whom, which is what you must do—eventually?"

"It's what I won't do. I'm not going back to *that*. Don't you see that's why I won't go back to you?"

Her apathy had become exhaustion. The flat, powerless voice, dying of its own utterance, gave him a sense of things past and done with, sunk into the ultimate oblivion. No voice of her energy and defiance could have touched him so. Her indifference troubled him like passion; in its completeness, its finality, it stirred him to decision, to acceptance of its terms. She was ready to fall from his grasp by her own dead weight. There was only one way in which he could hold her.

"Kitty," he said, "is that really why you won't come back?"

"Yes. That's why. Anything—anything but that."

"I see. You're tired of it? And you want to give it up? Well, I'm not sure that I don't want you to."

"Then why," she moaned, "why won't you let me go?"

He came and sat close to her. He leaned his face to hers and spoke thick and low.

"You can't give it up, dear. You're bound to go back."

"No—no—no. Don't talk about it."

"I won't. I won't ask you to go back. But I can't do without you."

"Oh, yes, you can. There are other women."

"I loathe them all. I wouldn't do for one of them what I'll do for you."

"What will you do for me?"

"I'll marry you, Kitty."

She laughed in her tired fashion.

"You want to make an honest woman of me, do you?"

"No. I think I'm endeavoring to make myself an honest man. If you give Lucy up for me I don't want you to lose by the transaction. You were to have been married. But for me, perhaps, you would have been. Very well, I'll marry you."

"And that," she said, "will make it all right?"

"Well—won't it?"

"No, it won't. How could it?"

"You know how. It will help you to keep straight. That's what you want, isn't it?"

"Oh, yes, that's what I *want*. And you think I'll keep straight by marrying you?"

"I won't swear to it. But I know it's ten to one that you'll go to the devil if you don't marry me. And you say you don't want to do that."

"I don't want—to marry you."

He shrugged his shoulders. "Perhaps not—but even marrying me might be better than the other alternative."

"It wouldn't," she cried. "It would be worse. If I married you I couldn't get away from you. I couldn't get away from *it*. You'd keep me in it. It's what you like me for—what you're marrying me for. You haven't married all these years because you can't stand living with a decent woman. And you think, if I marry you, it will make it all right. All right!"

She rose and defied him. "Why, I'd rather be your mistress. Then I could get away from you. I shall get away now."

She turned violently and he leaped up and caught her in his arms. She struggled, beating upon his breast and crying with a sad, inarticulate cry. She would have sunk to the floor if he had not kept his hold of her.

He raised her, and she stood still, breathing hard, while he still grasped her tightly by the wrists.

"Let me go," she said faintly.

"Where are you going to?"

"I don't know."

"You've no money. If you're not going back, what are you going to do?"

"I don't know."

Her eyelids dropped, and he saw mendacity in her eyes' furtive fleeing under cover. He held her tighter. His arm shook her, not brutally, but with a nervous movement that he was powerless to control.

"You lie," he said. "You've been lying to me all the time. You *are* going back. You're going to that fellow Lucy."

"No. I'm going—somewhere—where I shan't see him."

"Where?"

"I don't know."

"Abroad?"

"I think so."

"By yourself?"

Her eyelids quivered, and she panted. "Yes."

There was a knock at the door.

"Let me go," she said again.

He let her go.

"You're going to live—by yourself—respectably—abroad?"

She was silent.

"And how long do you think that will last?"

"I don't know."

Jane Lucy's voice called her from the door. He swore under his breath.

"Let her come in. I want her."

He laid his hand upon the door.

"What are you going to do?" he reiterated.

"Oh, let her come to me."

"You haven't answered my question."

"Let me see her first. Leave me alone with her."

"Very well."

He opened the door and bowed to Jane Lucy as she entered.

"I shall come back," he said, "for my answer."

CHAPTER XXII.

"Did Robert send you?" she asked when she was alone with Jane.

"Yes."

"It's no-good. I can't do what he wants."

"What are you going to do, dear?"

"I don't know. I don't care. The terrible thing is that I've had to hurt him. I must go away somewhere."

"I'll come with you and see you through."

Kitty shook her head.

"Don't think about it now," said Jane.

"No. I can't think. I'm too tired, and my head's hot. But if I go away you'll understand why I did it?"

"Kitty"—Jane whispered it—"you won't go back?"

"No. I won't go back. You won't have to think that of me."

She had not looked at Jane as they talked. Now she turned to her with eyes of anguish and appeal.

"Janey—think. I've been wicked for years and years. I've only been good for one moment. One moment—when I gave Robert up. Do you think it'll count?"

"I think that, in the sight of God, such moments last forever."

"And that's what you'll think of me by?"

She lifted up her face, haggard and white, flame-spotted where her tears had scorched it. Jane kissed it.

"Do you mind kissing me?"

"My dear, my dear," said Jane, and she drew her closer.

There was a sound of footsteps in the passage. Kitty drew back and listened.

"Where's Robert?"

"Upstairs with the children."

"They'll be asleep by this time, won't they?"

"Fast asleep."

The footsteps came again, approach-

ing the door. They paused outside it a moment and turned back.

"Do you hear that?" said Kitty. "It's Wilfrid Marston walking up and down. He wants to get hold of me. I think he's mad about me. He asked me to marry him just now, and I wouldn't. He thinks I didn't mean it, and he's coming back for his answer. But I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I shall go out quietly by the window, and slip away, and he won't find me. I want you to be here when he comes and tell him that he can't see me. Would you mind doing that?"

"No."

"You'll stay here all the time, and you won't let him go out and look for me?"

"Yes."

Kitty listened again for the footsteps.

"He's still there," she whispered.

"And you'll go to bed, Kitty?"

"Yes. Of course I will."

She went out through the window onto the veranda, into the garden.

It was cool out there and unutterably peaceful, with a tender, lucid twilight on the bare grass of the lawn, on the sea beyond it, and on the white gravel path by the low wall between. She saw it, the world that had held her and Robert, that, holding them, had taken on the ten days' splendor of their passion. It stood, divinely still in the perishing violet light, a world withdrawn and unsubstantial, yet piercingly, intolerably near.

Indoors Jane waited. It was not yet the half hour. She waited till the clock struck and Marston came.

He looked round the room, and his face, under its deference, betrayed his sharp annoyance.

"Pardon me," he said. "I thought that Mrs. Tailleux was here."

"Mrs. Tailleux asked me to tell you that she cannot see you. She has gone to her room."

"To her room?"

He stared at her, and his face loosened in incredulity and dismay.

"Yes. She was very tired."

"But—she was here not half an hour ago. She couldn't have gone without my seeing her."

"She went out," said Jane faintly, "by the window."

"She couldn't get to her room without going through the hall. I've been there all the time, by the stairs."

They looked at each other. The seat by the stairs commanded all ways in and out, the entrance of the passage and the door of the sitting room.

"I think that she has not gone far. But if she goes it is you who will have driven her away," she said.

"Forgive me if I remind you that it is not I who have given her up."

"It was you," said Jane quietly, "who helped to ruin her."

His raised eyebrows expressed an urbane surprise at the curious frankness of her charge. And with a delicate gesture he repudiated it.

"My dear lady, you are alarmed and you are angry, consequently you are unjust. Whatever poor Kitty may have done, I am not responsible."

"You are responsible. It's you, and men like you, who have dragged her down. You took advantage of her weakness, of her very helplessness. You've made her so that she can't believe in a man's goodness and trust herself to it."

He smiled, with untroubled urbanity.

"And you consider me responsible?"

Their eyes met. "My brother is here," said she. "Would you like to see him?"

"It might be as well, perhaps. If you can find him."

She left him, and he waited five minutes, ten minutes, twenty.

She returned alone. All her defiance had gone from her, and the face that she turned to him was white with fear.

"She is not here," she said. "She

went out—by that window—and she has not come in. We've searched the hotel and we can't find her."

"And your brother?"

"He has gone out to look for her."

She sat down by the table, turning her face away.

Marston gave one look at her. He stepped out and crossed the lawn to the bottom of the garden. The gate at the end of the path there swung open violently, and he found himself face to face with Robert Lucy.

"What have you done with Mrs. Tailleux?" he said.

Lucy's head was sunk upon his breast. He did not look at him nor answer. The two men walked back in silence up the lawn.

"You don't know where she is?" said Marston presently.

"No. I thought I did. But—she is not there."

He paused, steadying his voice.

"If I don't find her I shall go up to town by the midnight train. Can you give me her address there?"

"You think she has gone up to town?" Marston spoke calmly. He was appeased by Lucy's agitation and his manifest ignorance as to Kitty's movements.

"There's nothing else she could do. I've got to find her. Will you be good enough to give me her address?"

"My dear Mr. Lucy, there's really no reason why I should. If Mrs. Tailleux has not gone up to town, her address won't help you. If she has gone, your discreetest course by far, if I may say so——"

"Is what?" said Lucy sternly.

"Why, my dear fellow, of course—to let her go."

Lucy raised his head. "I do not intend," he said, "to let her go."

"Nor I," said Marston.

"Then we've neither of us any time

to lose. I won't answer for what she may do, in the state she's in."

"If you'd known Mrs. Tailleux as long as I have, you'd have no sort of doubt as to what she'll do."

Lucy did not appear to have heard, so sunk was he in his thoughts.

"What was that?" said Marston suddenly.

They listened. The gate of the cliff path creaked on its hinges and fell back with a sharp click of the latch. Lucy turned and saw a small woman's figure entering the garden from the cliff. He strode on toward the house, unwilling to be observed and overtaken.

Marston followed him slowly.

He heard footsteps, quick, stumbling footsteps, and a sound like a hoarse, half-suffocating breath behind him. Then a woman's voice, that sank, stumbling, like the footsteps, as it spoke.

"Mr. Lucy," it said, "is it you?"

Marston went on.

Lucy was in the room with his sister. He was sitting with his back to the open window as Marston came in.

The voice outside was nearer; it whispered: "Where is Mr. Lucy?"

"Somebody's looking for you, Lucy," said Marston.

And the three turned round.

Mrs. Hankin stood in the window, holding onto the frame of it and trembling. Her face, her perfect face, was gray, like the face of an old woman. It was drawn and disfigured.

"Mrs. Tailleux," she said, "Mrs. Tailleux. We found her—down there. She's killed. She fell from the cliff."

The three stood still as she spoke.

Then Jane rushed forward to her brother with a cry, and Mrs. Hankin stretched out her arms and barred the way.

There were small spots of blood on her hands and on her dress.

"Go back, child," she said. "They're carrying her in."

THE END.

by
O. Henry



Compliments of the Season

THERE are no more Christmas stories to write. Fiction is exhausted; and newspaper items, the next best, are manufactured by clever young journalists who have married early and have an engagingly pessimistic view of life. Therefore, for seasonable diversion, we are reduced to two very questionable sources—facts and philosophy. We will begin with—whichever you choose to call it.

Children are pestilential little animals with which we have to cope under a bewildering variety of conditions. Especially when childish sorrows overwhelm them are we put to our wits' end. We exhaust our paltry store of consolation; and then beat them, sobbing to sleep. Then we grovel in the dust of a million years, and ask God why. Thus we call out of the rat-trap. As for the children, no one understands them except old maids, hunchbacks, and shepherd dogs.

Now come the facts in the case of

the Rag-Doll, the Tatterdemalion, and the Twenty-fifth of December.

On the tenth of that month the Child of the Millionaire lost her rag-doll. There were many servants in the Millionaire's palace on the Hudson, and these ransacked the house and grounds, but without finding the lost treasure. The Child was a girl of five, and one of those perverse little beasts that often wound the sensibilities of wealthy parents by fixing their affections upon some vulgar, inexpensive toy instead of upon diamond-studded automobiles and pony phaetons.

The Child grieved sorely and truly, a thing inexplicable to the Millionaire, to whom the rag-doll market was about as interesting as Bay State Gas; and to the Lady, the Child's mother, who was all for form—that is, nearly all, as you shall see.

The Child cried inconsolably, and grew hollow-eyed, knock-kneed, spindling, and corykilverty in many other

respects. The Millionaire smiled and tapped his coffers confidently. The pick of the output of the French and German toymakers was rushed by special delivery to the mansion; but Rachel refused to be comforted. She was weeping for her rag child, and was for a high protective tariff against all foreign foolishness. Then doctors with the finest bedside manners and stop-watches were called in. One by one they chattered futilely about peptomanganate of iron and sea voyages and hypophosphites until their stop-watches showed that Bill Rendered was under the wire for show or place. Then, as men, they advised that the rag-doll be found as soon as possible and restored to its mourning parent. The Child sniffed at therapeutics, chewed a thumb, and wailed for her Betsy. And all this time cablegrams were coming from Santa Claus saying that he would soon be here and enjoining us to show a true Christian spirit and let up on the poolrooms and tontine policies and platoon systems long enough to give him a welcome. Everywhere the spirit of Christmas was diffusing itself. The banks were refusing loans, the pawn-brokers had doubled their gang of helpers, people bumped your shins on the streets with red sleds, Thomas and Jeremiah bubbled before you on the bars while you waited on one foot, holly-wreaths of hospitality were hung in windows of the stores, they who had 'em were getting out their furs. You hardly knew which was the best bet in balls—three, high, moth, or snow. It was no time at which to lose the rag-doll of your heart.

If Doctor Watson's investigating friend had been called in to solve this mysterious disappearance he might have observed on the Millionaire's wall a copy of "The Vampire." That would have quickly suggested, by induction, "A rag and a bone and a hank of hair." "Flip," a Scotch terrier, next to the

rag-doll in the Child's heart, frisked through the halls. The hank of hair! Aha! X, the unfound quantity, represented the rag-doll. But, the bone? Well, when dogs find bones they—Done! It were an easy and a fruitful task to examine Flip's forefeet. Look, Watson! Earth—dried earth between the toes. Of course the dog—but Sherlock was not there. Therefore it devolves. But topography and architecture must intervene.

The Millionaire's palace occupied a lordly space. In front of it was a lawn close-mowed as a South Ireland man's face two days after a shave. At one side of it and fronting on another street was a pleasance trimmed to a leaf, and the garage and stables. The Scotch pup had ravished the rag-doll from the nursery, dragged it to a corner of the lawn, dug a hole, and buried it after the manner of careless undertakers. There you have the mystery solved, and no checks to write for the hypodermical wizard or fi'-pun notes to toss to the sergeant. Then let's get down to the heart of the thing, tire-some readers—the Christmas heart of the thing.

Fuzzy was drunk. Not riotously or helplessly or loquaciously, as you or I might get, but decently, appropriately, and inoffensively, as becomes a gentleman down on his luck.

Fuzzy was a soldier of misfortune. The road, the haystack, the park bench, the kitchen door, the bitter round of eleemosynary beds-with-shower-bath-attachment, the petty pickings and ignobly garnered largesse of great cities—these formed the chapters of his history.

Fuzzy walked toward the river, down the street that bounded one side of the Millionaire's house and grounds. He saw a leg of Betsy, the lost rag-doll, protruding, like the clew to a Lilliputian murder mystery, from its untimely grave in a corner of the fence. He

dragged forth the maltreated infant, tucked it under his arm, and went on his way crooning a road song of his brethren that no doll that has been brought up to the sheltered life should hear. Well for Betsy that she had no ears. And well that she had no eyes save unseeing circles of black; for the faces of Fuzzy and the Scotch terrier were those of brothers, and the heart of no rag-doll could withstand twice to become the prey of such fearsome monsters.

Though you may not know it, Grogan's saloon stands near the river and near the foot of the street down which Fuzzy traveled. In Grogan's, Christmas cheer was already rampant.

Fuzzy entered with his doll. He fancied that as a mummer at the feast of Saturn he might earn a few drops from the wassail cup.

He set Betsy on the bar and addressed her loudly and humorously, seasoning his speech with exaggerated compliments and endearments, as one entertaining his lady friend. The loafers and bibbers around caught the farce of it, and roared. The bartender gave Fuzzy a drink. Oh, many of us carry rag-dolls.

"One for the lady?" suggested Fuzzy impudently, and tucked another contribution to Art beneath his waistcoat.

He began to see possibilities in Betsy. His first-night had been a success. Visions of a vaudeville circuit about town dawned upon him.

In a group near the stove sat "Pig-eon" McCarthy, Black Riley, and "One-ear" Mike, well and unfavorably known in the tough shoestring district that blackened the left bank of the river. They passed a newspaper back and forth among themselves. The item that each solid and blunt forefinger pointed out was an advertisement headed "One Hundred Dollars Reward." To earn it, one must return the rag-doll lost, strayed, or stolen from

the Millionaire's mansion. It seemed that grief still ravaged, unchecked, in the bosom of the too faithful Child. Flip, the terrier, capered and shook his absurd whiskers before her, powerless to distract. She wailed for her Betsy in the faces of walking, talking, mamma-ing, and eye-closing French Mabelles and Violettes. The advertisement was a last resort.

Black Riley came from behind the stove and approached Fuzzy in his one-sided, parabolic way.

The Christmas mummer, flushed with success, had tucked Betsy under his arm, and was about to depart to the filling of impromptu dates elsewhere.

"Say, 'Bo,'" said Black Riley to him, "where did you cop out dat doll?"

"This doll?" asked Fuzzy, touching Betsy with his forefinger to be sure that she was the one referred to. "Why, this doll was presented to me by the Emperor of Beloochistan. I have seven hundred others in my country home in Newport. This doll——"

"Cheese the funny business," said Riley. "You swiped it or picked it up at de house on de hill where—but never mind dat. You want to take fifty cents for de rags, and take it quick. Me brother's kid at home might be wantin' to play wid it. Hey—what?"

He produced the coin.

Fuzzy laughed a gurgling, insolent, alcoholic laugh in his face. Go to the office of Sarah Bernhardt's manager and propose to him that she be released from a night's performance to entertain the tackytown Lyceum and Literary Coterie. You will hear the duplicate of Fuzzy's laugh.

Black Riley gauged Fuzzy quickly with his blueberry eye as a wrestler does. His hand was itching to play the Roman and wrest the rag Sabine from the extemporaneous merry-andrew who was entertaining an angel unaware. But he refrained. Fuzzy was fat and solid and big. Three

inches of well-nourished coporeity, defended from the winter winds by dingy linen, intervened between his vest and trousers. Countless small, circular wrinkles running around his coat-sleeves and knees guaranteed the quality of his bone and muscle. His small, blue eyes, bathed in the moisture of altruism and wooziness, looked upon you kindly yet without abashment. He was whiskerly, whiskyly, fleshily formidable. So, Black Riley temporized. "Wot'll you take for it, den?" he asked.

"Money," said Fuzzy with husky firmness, "cannot buy her."

He was intoxicated with the artist's first sweet cup of attainment. To set a faded-blue, earth-stained rag-doll on a bar, to hold mimic converse with it, and to find his heart leaping with the sense of plaudits earned and his throat scorching with free libations poured in his honor—could base coin buy him from such achievements? You will perceive that Fuzzy had the temperament.

Fuzzy walked out with the gait of a trained sea-lion in search of other cafés to conquer.

Though the dusk of twilight was hardly yet apparent, lights were beginning to spangle the city like pop-corn bursting in a deep skillet. Christmas Eve, impatiently expected, was peeping over the brink of the hour. Millions had prepared for its celebration. Towns would be painted red. You, yourself, have heard the horns and dodged the capers of the Saturnalians.

Pigeon McCarthy, Black Riley, and One-ear Mike held a hasty converse outside Grogan's. They were narrow-chested, pallid striplings, not fighters in the open, but more dangerous in their ways of warfare than the most terrible of Turks. Fuzzy, in a pitched battle, could have eaten the three of them. In a go-as-you-please encounter he was already doomed.

They overtook him just as he and Betsy were entering Costigan's Casino. They deflected him, and shoved the newspaper under his nose. Fuzzy could read—and more.

"Boys," said he, "you are certainly damn true friends. Give me a week to think it over."

The soul of a real artist is quenched with difficulty.

The boys carefully pointed out to him that advertisements were soulless, and that the deficiencies of the day might not be supplied by the morrow.

"A cool hundred," said Fuzzy thoughtfully and mushily.

"Boys," said he, "you are true friends. I'll go up and claim the reward. The show business is not what it used to be."

Night was falling more surely. The three tagged at his sides to the foot of the rise on which stood the Millionaire's house. There Fuzzy turned upon them acrimoniously.

"You are a pack of putty-faced beagle-hounds," he roared. "Go away."

They went away—a little way.

In Pigeon McCarthy's pocket was a section of two-inch gas-pipe eight inches long. In one end of it and in the middle of it was a lead plug. One half of it was packed tight with solder. Black Riley carried a slung-shot, being a conventional thug. One-ear Mike relied upon a pair of brass knucks, an heirloom in the family.

"Why fetch and carry," said Black Riley, "when some one will do it for ye? Let him bring it out to us. Hey—what?"

"We can chuck him in the river," said Pigeon McCarthy, "with a stone tied to his feet."

"Youse guys make me tired," said One-ear Mike sadly. "Ain't progress ever appealed to none of yez? Sprinkle a little gasoline on 'im, and drop 'im on the Drive—well?"

Fuzzy entered the Millionaire's gate

and zigzagged toward the softly glowing entrance of the mansion. The three goblins came up to the gate and lingered—one on each side of it, one beyond the roadway. They fingered their cold metal and leather, confident.

Fuzzy rang the doorbell, smiling foolishly and dreamily. An atavistic instinct prompted him to reach for the button of his right glove. But he wore no gloves; so his left hand dropped, embarrassed.

The particular menial whose duty it was to open doors to silks and laces shied at first sight of Fuzzy. But a second glance took in his passport, his card of admission, his surety of welcome—the lost rag-doll of the daughter of the house dangling under his arm.

Fuzzy was admitted into a great hall, dim with the glow from unseen lights. The hireling went away and returned with a maid and the Child. The doll was restored to the mourning one. She clasped her lost darling to her breast; and then, with the inordinate selfishness and candor of childhood, stamped her foot and whined hatred and fear of the odious being who had rescued her from the depths of sorrow and despair. Fuzzy wriggled himself into an ingratiatory attitude and essayed the idiotic smile and blattering small talk that is supposed to charm the budding intellect of the young. The Child bawled, and was dragged away, hugging her Betsy close.

There came the Secretary, pale, poised, polished, gliding in pumps, and worshipping pomp and ceremony. He counted out into Fuzzy's hand ten ten-dollar bills; then dropped his eye upon the door, transferred it to James, its custodian, indicated the obnoxious earner of the reward with the other, and allowed his pumps to waft him away to secretarial regions.

James gathered Fuzzy with his own

commanding optic and swept him as far as the front door.

When the money touched Fuzzy's dingy palm his first instinct was to take to his heels; but a second thought restrained him from that blunder of etiquette. It was his; it had been given him. It—and, oh, what an elysium it opened to the gaze of his mind's eye! He had tumbled to the foot of the ladder; he was hungry, homeless, friendless, ragged, cold, drifting; and he held in his hand the key to a paradise of the mud-honey that he craved. The fairy doll had waved a wand with her rag-stuffed hand; and now wherever he might go the enchanted palaces with shining foot-rests and magic red fluids in gleaming glassware would be open to him.

He followed James to the door.

He paused there as the flunky drew open the great mahogany portal for him to pass into the vestibule.

Beyond the wrought-iron gates in the dark highway Black Riley and his two pals casually strolled, fingering under their coats the inevitably fatal weapons that were to make the reward of the rag-doll theirs.

Fuzzy stopped at the Millionaire's door and bethought himself. Like little sprigs of mistletoe on a dead tree, certain living green thoughts and memories began to decorate his confused mind. He was quite drunk, mind you, and the present was beginning to fade. Those wreaths and festoons of holly with their scarlet berries making the great hall gay—where had he seen such things before? Somewhere he had known polished floors and odors of fresh flowers in winter, and—some one was singing a song in the house that he thought he had heard before. Some one singing and playing a harp. Of course it was Christmas—Fuzzy thought he must have been pretty drunk to have overlooked that.

And then he went out of the present,

and there came back to him out of some impossible, vanished, and irrevocable past a little, pure-white, transient, forgotten ghost—the spirit of noblesse oblige. Upon a gentleman certain things devolve.

James opened the outer door. A stream of light went down the gravelled walk to the iron gate. Black Riley, McCarthy, and One-ear Mike saw, and carelessly drew their sinister cordon closer about the gate.

With a more imperious gesture than James' master had ever used or could ever use, Fuzzy compelled the menial to close the door. Upon a gentleman certain things devolve. Especially at the Christmas season.

"It is cust—customary," he said to James, the flustered, "when a gentleman calls on Christmas Eve to pass the compliments of the season with the lady of the house. You und'stand? I shall not move shtep till I pass compliments season with lady the house. Und'stand?"

There was an argument. James lost. Fuzzy raised his voice and sent it through the house unpleasantly. He did not say he was a gentleman. He was simply a tramp being visited by a ghost.

A sterling-silver bell rang. James went back to answer it, leaving Fuzzy in the hall. James explained somewhere to some one.

Then he came and conducted Fuzzy into the library.

The Lady entered a moment later. She was more beautiful and holy than any picture that Fuzzy had seen. She smiled, and said something about a doll. Fuzzy didn't understand that; he remembered nothing about a doll.

A footman brought in two small glasses of sparkling wine on a stamped sterling-silver waiter. The Lady took one. The other was handed to Fuzzy.

As his fingers closed on the slender

glass stem his disabilities dropped from him for one brief moment. He straightened himself; and Time, so disobliging to most of us, turned backward to accommodate Fuzzy.

Forgotten Christmas ghosts whiter than the false beards of the most opulent Kriss Kringle were rising in the fumes of Grogan's whisky. What had the Millionaire's mansion to do with a long, wainscoted Virginia hall, where the riders were grouped around a silver punch-bowl, drinking the ancient toast of the House? And why should the patter of the cab horses' hoofs on the frozen street be in any wise related to the sound of the saddled hunters stamping under the shelter of the west veranda? And what had Fuzzy to do with any of it?

The Lady, looking at him over her glass, let her condescending smile fade away like a false dawn. Her eyes turned serious. She saw something beneath the rags and Scotch terrier whiskers that she did not understand. But it did not matter.

Fuzzy lifted his glass and smiled vacantly.

"P-pardon, lady," he said, "but couldn't leave without exchangin' compliments sheason with lady the house. 'Gainst principles gen'leman do sho."

And then he began the ancient salutation that was a tradition in the House when men wore lace ruffles and powder.

"The blessings of another year——"

Fuzzy's memory failed him. The Lady prompted:

"——Be upon this hearth."

"——The guest——" stammered Fuzzy.

"——And upon her who——" continued the Lady, with a leading smile.

"Oh, cut it out," said Fuzzy ill-manneredly. "I can't remember. Drink hearty."

Fuzzy had shot his arrow. They

drank. The Lady smiled again the smile of her caste. James enveloped Fuzzy and re-conducted him toward the front door. The harp music still softly drifted through the house.

Outside, Black Riley breathed on his cold hands and hugged the gate.

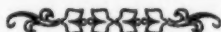
"I wonder," said the Lady to herself, musing, "who—but there were so many who came. I wonder whether memory is a curse or a blessing to them after they have fallen so low."

Fuzzy and his escort were nearly at the door. The Lady called: "James!"

James stalked back obsequiously, leaving Fuzzy waiting unsteadily, with his brief spark of the divine fire gone.

Outside, Black Riley stamped his cold feet and got a firmer grip on his section of gas pipe.

"You will conduct this gentleman," said the Lady, "downstairs. Then tell Louis to get out the Mercedes and take him to whatever place he wishes to go."



LOVE could never have become a divinity if he had not often worked miracles.
—*L'Abbé Prévost.*



WOMAN has hitherto been treated by men like birds, which, losing their way, have come down among them from an elevation: as something delicate, fragile, wild, strange, sweet, and animating—but as something also which must be cooped up to prevent it flying away.—*Friedrich Nietzsche.*



WHEN we shall be endowed with spiritual bodies I think they will be so constituted that we may send thoughts and feelings any distance, in no time at all, and transfuse them warm and fresh into the consciousness of those we love. Oh, what happiness it would be at this moment, if I could be conscious of some purer feeling, some more delicate sentiment, some lovelier fantasy than could possibly have had its birth in my own nature, and therefore be aware that you were thinking through my mind and feeling through my heart! Perhaps you possess this power already.—*Nathaniel Hawthorne.*



"If man climbs fast," I began, "he falls back again. We English tried to go fast with Cromwell and fell back with Charles II. You would put a Cromwell out of breath. If we were to adopt your rate of progress, we should need a Christ in every street."

"Even that does not seem impossible to me," she cried, starting to her feet and beginning to pace backwards and forwards as if she needed a physical outlet for her emotion. "Nothing is impossible; there are no limits to what the soul may do. You talk of a Christ in every street; but you have forgotten that there is a woman in every house. Look what we have already done for the humanization and refinement of man, and what we are still doing. He is ashamed now to be dissolute and drunken; he will soon be ashamed of greed and self-seeking. Woman is gradually molding man to her ideal! For ages she has done it unconsciously; now that she is beginning to do it consciously, the progress will be more rapid than you can imagine."—*Frank Harris.*

A Book Lovers' Tournament

Introducing a new kind of mystery story

HOW fully does the style betray the writer? Could you detect the essence of Shakespeare in an obscure passage of his work? Could you read "Dickens" between the lines of a Pickwickian dialogue? Would the felicitous flow of an anonymous extract from a Stevenson romance reveal its author to you?

On the next page you will find a complete story whose title is withheld and whose author is left anonymous. The name of the author is known wherever books are circulated.

Can you identify the author and the story?

* * * * *

IF you can detect the title of this month's anonymous story and the name of its author, send us a letter of not more than one thousand words, and in it tell us:

1. The title of the story.
 2. The full name of the story's author.
 3. Your reason for attributing the story to the author you have named.
 4. How you discovered the title of the story.
 5. What you think of the story.
- * * * * *

TO the writer of the most interesting letter composed as above outlined and correctly naming the title and author of the anonymous story appearing in this issue of AINSLEE'S MAGAZINE, the editors will pay fifty dollars. To each of the writers of the ten letters next in order of excellence the editors will pay five dollars.

* * * * *

LETTERS will be judged on the basis of literary merit and authenticated accuracy. In order to receive consideration, each letter must show that its writer has definite knowledge of the anonymous story's title and author. This knowledge may come of standing familiarity with the works of the author under consideration, or may be derived from inquiry, research, and comparison. But each letter must clearly explain on what authority its writer bases his conclusion. Letters which exhibit evidence of guesswork will not receive consideration.

* * * * *

ALL letters competing in the Book Lovers' Tournament of this issue must be received by the Editor of AINSLEE'S MAGAZINE, at 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City, on or before January 10th, 1926.

The names of successful contestants will be published in AINSLEE'S MAGAZINE for the month of March, 1926.

There will be another anonymous story in the February issue.

Who Wrote This Story?



What Is Its Title?

THE château into which my valet had ventured to make forcible entrance, rather than permit me, in my desperately wounded condition, to pass a night in the open air, was one of those piles of commingled gloom and grandeur which have so long frowned among the Appennines, not less in fact than in the fancy of Mrs. Radcliffe. To all appearance it had been temporarily and very lately abandoned. We established ourselves in one of the smallest and least sumptuously furnished apartments. It lay in a remote turret of the building. Its decorations were rich, yet tattered and antique. Its walls were hung with tapestry and bedecked with manifold and multiform armorial trophies, together with an unusually great number of very spirited modern paintings in frames of rich golden arabesque. In these paintings, which depended from the walls not only in their main surfaces, but in very many nooks which the bizarre architecture of the château rendered necessary—in these paintings my incipient delirium, perhaps, had caused me to take deep interest; so that I bade Pedro to close the heavy shutters of the room—since it was already night—to light the tongues of a tall candelabrum

which stood by the head of my bed, and to throw open far and wide the fringed curtains of black velvet which enveloped the bed itself. I wished all this done that I might resign myself, if not to sleep, at least alternately to the contemplation of these pictures, and the perusal of a small volume which had been found upon the pillow, and which purported to criticize and describe them.

Long, long I read—and devoutly, devoutly I gazed. Rapidly and gloriously the hours flew by and the deep midnight came. The position of the candelabrum displeased me, and outreaching my hand with difficulty, rather than disturb my slumbering valet, I placed it so as to throw its rays more fully upon the book.

But the action produced an effect altogether unanticipated. The rays of the numerous candles—for there were many—now fell within a niche of the room which had hitherto been thrown into deep shade by one of the bedposts. I thus saw in vivid light a picture all unnoticed before. It was the portrait of a young girl just ripening into womanhood. I glanced at the painting hurriedly, and then closed my eyes. Why I did this was not at first apparent even to my own perception. But while my

lids remained thus shut, I ran over in mind my reason for so shutting them. It was an impulsive movement to gain time for thought—to make sure that my vision had not deceived me—to calm and subdue my fancy for a more sober and more certain gaze. In a very few moments I again looked fixedly at the painting.

That I now saw aright I could not and would not doubt; for the first flashing of the candle upon that canvas had seemed to dissipate the dreamy stupor which was stealing over my senses, and to startle me at once into waking life.

The portrait, I have already said, was that of a young girl. It was a mere head and shoulders, done in what is technically termed a *vignette* manner; much in the style of the favorite heads of Sully. The arms, the bosom, and even the ends of the radiant hair melted imperceptibly into the vague yet deep shadow which formed the background of the whole. The frame was oval, richly gilded and filigreed in *Moresque*. As a thing of art nothing could be more admirable than the painting itself. But it could have been neither the execution of the work, nor the immortal beauty of the countenance, which had so suddenly and so vehemently moved me. Least of all, could it have been that my fancy, shaken from its half slumber, had mistaken the head for that of a living person. I saw at once that the peculiarities of the design, of the *vignetting*, and of the frame, must have instantly dispelled such idea—must have prevented even its momentary entertainment. Thinking earnestly upon these points, I remained, for an hour perhaps, half sitting, half reclining, with my vision riveted upon the portrait. At length, satisfied with the true secret of its effect, I fell back within the bed. I had found the spell of the picture in an absolute *life-likeness* of expression, which, at first startling, finally confounded, subdued, and appalled me. With deep and

reverent awe I replaced the candelabrum in its former position. The cause of my deep agitation being thus shut from view, I sought eagerly the volume which discussed the paintings and their histories. Turning to the number which designated the oval portrait, I there read the vague and quaint words which follow:

"She was a maiden of rarest beauty, and not more lovely than full of glee. And evil was the hour when she saw, and loved, and wedded the painter. He, passionate, studious, austere, and having already a bride in his art: she a maiden of rarest beauty, and not more lovely than full of glee; all light and smiles, and frolicsome as the young fawn; loving and cherishing all things; hating only the art which was her rival; dreading only the pallet and brushes and other untoward instruments which deprived her of the countenance of her lover. It was thus a terrible thing for this lady to hear the painter speak of his desire to portray even his young bride. But she was humble and obedient, and sat meekly for many weeks in the dark, high turret chamber where the light dripped upon the pale canvas only from overhead. But he, the painter, took glory in his work, which went on from hour to hour, and from day to day. And he was a passionate, and wild, and moody man, who became lost in reveries; so that he *would* not see that the light which fell so ghastly in that lone turret withered the health and the spirits of his bride, who pined visibly to all but him. Yet she smiled on and still on, uncomplainingly, because she saw that the painter—who had high renown—took a fervid and burning pleasure in his task, and wrought day and night to depict her who so loved him, yet who grew daily more dispirited and weak. And in sooth some who beheld the portrait spoke of its resemblance in low words, as of a mighty marvel, and a proof not less of the power of the painter than of his deep

love for her whom he depicted so surpassingly well. But at length, as the labor drew nearer to its conclusion, there were admitted none into the turret; for the painter had grown wild with the ardor of his work, and turned his eyes from the canvas rarely, even to regard the countenance of his wife. And he *would* not see that the tints which he spread upon the canvas were drawn from the cheeks of her who sat beside him. And when many weeks had passed, and but little remained to do, save one

brush upon the mouth and one tint upon the eye, the spirit of the lady again flickered up as the flame within the socket of the lamp. And then the brush was given, and then the tint was placed; and, for one moment, the painter stood entranced before the work which he had wrought; but in the next, while he yet gazed, he grew tremulous and very pallid, and aghast, and crying with a loud voice, "This is indeed *Life* itself!" turned suddenly to regard his beloved. *She was dead!*"



NON SUM QUALIS ERAM BONAE SUB REGNO CYNARAE

LAST night, ah, yesternight, betwixt her lips and mine
There fell thy shadow, Cynara! Thy breath was shed
Upon my soul between the kisses and the wine;
And I was desolate and sick of an old passion;
Yea, I was desolate and bowed my head.
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara, in my fashion.

All night upon mine heart I felt her warm heart beat;
Night long within mine arms in love and sleep she lay.
Surely the kisses of her bought red mouth were sweet;
But I was desolate and sick of an old passion,
When I awoke and found the dawn was gray.
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara, in my fashion.

I have forgot much, Cynara; gone with the wind;
Flung roses, roses riotously with the throng,
Dancing to put thy pale, lost lilies out of mind;
But I was desolate and sick of an old passion,
Yea, all the time, because the dance was long:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara, in my fashion.

I cried for madder music and for stronger wine,
But when the feast is finished and the lamps expire,
Then falls thy shadow, Cynara! The night is thine;
And I am desolate and sick of an old passion,
Yea, hungry for the lips of my desire:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara, in my fashion.

Ernest Dowson.

by
E. W. Hornung

Author of

"Stingaree"
and "Raffles"



A Costume Piece

A Story of Raffles, "The Amateur Cracksmen"

LONDON was just then talking of one whose name is already a name and nothing more. Reuben Rosenthall had made his millions on the diamond fields of South Africa, and had come home to enjoy them according to his lights; how he went to work will scarcely be forgotten by any reader of the halfpenny evening papers, which reveled in endless anecdotes of his original indigence and present prodigality, varied with interesting particulars of the extraordinary establishment which the millionaire set up in St. John's Wood. Here he kept a retinue of Kafirs, who were literally his slaves; and hence he would sally, with enormous diamonds in his shirt and on his finger, in the convoy of a prizefighter of heinous repute, who was not, however, by any means the worst element in the Rosenthall ménage. So said common gossip; but the fact was sufficiently established by the interference of the police on at least one occasion, fol-

lowed by certain magisterial proceedings which were reported with justifiable gusto and huge headlines in the newspapers aforesaid. And this was all one knew of Reuben Rosenthall up to the time when the Old Bohemian Club, having fallen on evil days, found it worth its while to organize a great dinner in honor of so wealthy an exponent of the club's principles. I was not at the banquet myself, but a member took Raffles, who told me all about it that very night.

"Most extraordinary show I ever went to in my life," said he. "As for the man himself—well, I was prepared for something grotesque, but the fellow fairly took my breath away. To begin with, he's the most astounding brute to look at, well over six feet, with a chest like a barrel, and a great hook nose, and the reddest hair and whiskers you ever saw. Drank like a fire engine, but only got drunk enough to make us a speech that I wouldn't have missed

for ten pounds. I'm only sorry you weren't there, too, Bunny, old chap."

I began to be sorry myself, for Raffles was anything but an excitable person, and never had I seen him so excited before. Had he been following Rosenthall's example? His coming to my rooms at midnight, merely to tell me about his dinner, was in itself enough to excite a suspicion which was certainly at variance with my knowledge of A. J. Raffles.

"What did he say?" I inquired mechanically, divining some subtler explanation of this visit, and wondering what on earth it could be.

"Say?" cried Raffles. "What did he not say! He boasted of his rise, he bragged of his riches, and he black-guarded society for taking him up for his money and dropping him out of sheer pique and jealousy because he had so much. He mentioned names, too, with the most charming freedom, and swore he was as good a man as the old country had to show—*pace* the Old Bohemians. To prove it he pointed to a great diamond in the middle of his shirt front with a little finger loaded with another just like it: which of our bloated princes could show a pair like that? As a matter of fact they seemed quite wonderful stones, with a curious purple gleam to them that must mean a pot of money. But old Rosenthall swore he wouldn't take fifty thousand pounds for the two, and wants to know where the other man was who went about with twenty-five thousand in his shirt front, and another twenty-five on his little finger. He didn't exist. If he did, he wouldn't have the pluck to wear them. But *he* had—he'd tell us why. And before you could say Jack Robinson he had whipped out a whacking great revolver!"

"Not at the table?"

"At the table! In the middle of his speech! But it was nothing to what he wanted to do. He actually wanted us to

let him write his name in bullets on the opposite wall to show us why he wasn't afraid to go about in all his diamonds! That brute Purvis, the prize fighter, who is his paid bully, had to bully his master before he could be persuaded out of it. There was quite a panic for the moment; one fellow was saying his prayers under the table, and the waiters bolted to a man."

"What a grotesque scene!"

"Grotesque enough, but I rather wish they had let him go the whole hog and blaze away. He was as keen as knives to show us how he could take care of his purple diamonds; and, do you know, Bunny, I was as keen as knives to see."

And Raffles leaned toward me with a sly, slow smile that made the hidden meaning of his visit only too plain to me at last.

"So you think of having a try for his diamonds yourself?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"It is horribly obvious, I admit. But—yes, I have set my heart upon them! To be quite frank, I have had them on my conscience for some time; one couldn't hear so much of the man, and his prize fighter, and his diamonds, without feeling it a kind of duty to have a go for them; but when it comes to brandishing a revolver and practically challenging the world, the thing becomes inevitable. It is simply thrust upon one. I was fated to hear that challenge, Bunny, and I, for one, must take it up. I was only sorry I couldn't get on my hind legs and say so then and there."

"Well," I said, "I don't see the necessity as things are with us; but, of course, I'm your man."

My tone may have been half-hearted. I did my best to make it otherwise. But it was barely a month since our Bond Street exploit, and we certainly could have afforded to behave ourselves for some time to come. We had been getting along so nicely: by his ad-

vice I had scribbled a thing or two; inspired by Raffles, I had even done an article on our own jewel robbery; and for the moment I was quite satisfied with this sort of adventure. I thought we ought to know when we were well off, and could see no point in our running fresh risks before we were obliged. On the other hand, I was anxious not to show the least disposition to break the pledge that I had given a month ago. But it was not on my manifest disinclination that Raffles fastened.

"Necessity, my dear Bunny? Does the writer only write when the wolf is at the door? Does the painter paint for bread alone? Must you and I be *driven* to crime like Tom of Bow and Dick of Whitechapel? You pain me, my dear chap; you needn't laugh, because you do. Art for art's sake is a vile catchword, but I confess it appeals to me. In this case my motives are absolutely pure, for I doubt if we shall ever be able to dispose of such peculiar stones. But if I don't have a try for them—after to-night—I shall never be able to hold up my head again."

His eyes twinkled, but they glittered too.

"We shall have our work cut out," was all I said.

"And do you suppose I should be keen on it if we hadn't?" cried Raffles. "My dear fellow, I would rob St. Paul's Cathedral if I could, but I could no more scoop a till when the shopwalker wasn't looking than I could bag the apples out of an old woman's basket. Even that little business last month was a sordid affair, but it was necessary, and I think its strategy redeemed it to some extent. Now there's some credit, and more sport, in going where they boast they're on their guard against you. The Bank of England, for example, is the ideal crib; but that would need half a dozen of us with years to give to the job; and meanwhile Reuben Rosenthal is high enough game for

you and me. We know he's armed. We know how Billy Purvis can fight. It'll be no soft thing, I grant you. But what of that, my good Bunny—what of that? A man's reach must exceed his grasp, dear boy, or what the dickens is a heaven for?"

"I would rather we didn't exceed ours just yet," I answered laughing, for his spirit was irresistible, and the plan was growing upon me, despite my qualms.

"Trust me for that," was his reply; "I'll see you through. After all I expect to find that the difficulties are nearly all on the surface. These fellows both drink like the devil, and that should simplify matters considerably. But we shall see, and we must take our time. There will probably turn out to be a dozen different ways in which the thing might be done, and we shall have to choose between them. It will mean watching the house for at least a week in any case; it may mean lots of other things that will take much longer; but give me a week, and I will tell you more. That's to say if you're really on?"

"Of course I am," I replied indignantly. "But why should I give you a week? Why shouldn't we watch the house together?"

"Because two eyes are as good as four and take up less room. Never hunt in couples unless you're obliged. But don't you look offended, Bunny; there'll be plenty for you to do when the time comes, that I promise you. You shall have your share of the fun, never fear, and a purple diamond all to yourself—if we're lucky."

On the whole, however, this conversation left me less than lukewarm, and I still remember the depression which came upon me when Raffles was gone. I saw the folly of the enterprise to which I had committed myself—the sheer, gratuitous, unnecessary folly of it. And the paradoxes in which Raffles

reveled, and the frivolous casuistry which was nevertheless half sincere, and which his mere personality rendered wholly plausible at the moment of utterance, appealed very little to me when recalled in cold blood. I admired the spirit of pure mischief in which he seemed prepared to risk his liberty and his life, but I did not find it an infectious spirit on calm reflection. Yet the thought of withdrawal was not to be entertained for a moment. On the contrary, I was impatient of the delay ordained by Raffles; and, perhaps, no small part of my secret disaffection came of his galling determination to do without me until the last moment.

It made it no better that this was characteristic of the man and of his attitude toward me. For a month we had been, I suppose, the thickest thieves in all London, and yet our intimacy was curiously incomplete. With all his charming frankness, there was in Raffles a vein of capricious reserve which was perceptible enough to be very irritating. He had the instinctive secretiveness of the inveterate criminal. He would make mysteries of matters of common concern; for example, I never knew how or where he disposed of the Bond Street jewels, on the proceeds of which we were both still leading the outward lives of hundreds of other young fellows about town. He was consistently mysterious about that and other details, of which it seemed to me that I had already earned the right to know everything. I could not but remember how he had led me into my first felony, by means of a trick, while yet uncertain whether he could trust me or not. That I could no longer afford to resent, but I did resent his want of confidence in me now. I said nothing about it, but it rankled every day, and never more than in the week that succeeded the Rosenthal dinner. When I met Raffles at the club he would tell me

nothing; when I went to his rooms he was out, or pretended to be.

One day he told me he was getting on well, but slowly; it was a more ticklish game than he had thought; but when I began to ask questions he would say no more. Then and there, in my annoyance, I took my own decision. Since he would tell me nothing of the result of his vigils, I determined to keep one of my own account, and that very evening found my way to the millionaire's front gates.

The house he was occupying is, I believe, quite the largest in the St. John's Wood district. It stands in the angle formed by two broad thoroughfares, neither of which, as it happens, is a bus route, and I doubt if many quieter spots exist within the four-mile radius. Quiet also was the great square house, in its garden of grass plots and shrubs; the lights were low, the millionaire and his friends obviously spending their evening elsewhere. The garden walls were only a few feet high. In one there was a side door opening into a glass passage; in the other two five-barred, grained-and-varnished gates, one at either end of the little semicircular drive, and both wide open. So still was the place that I had a great mind to walk boldly in and learn something of the premises; in fact, I was on the point of doing so, when I heard a quick, shuffling step on the pavement behind me. I turned round and faced the dark scowl and dirty, clenched fists of a dilapidated tramp.

"You fool!" said he. "You utter idiot!"

"Raffles!"

"That's it," he whispered savagely; "tell all the neighborhood—give me away at the top of your voice!"

With that he turned his back upon me, and shambled down the road, shrugging his shoulders and muttering to himself as though I had refused him alms. A few moments I stood

astounded, indignant, at a loss; then I followed him. His feet trailed, his knees gave, his back was bowed, his head kept nodding; it was the gait of a man eighty years of age. Presently he waited for me midway between two lamp-posts. As I came up he was lighting rank tobacco, in a cutty pipe, with an evil-smelling match, and the flame showed me the suspicion of a smile.

"You must forgive my heat, Bunny, but it really was very foolish of you. Here am I trying every dodge—begging at the door one night—hiding in the shrubs the next—doing every mortal thing but stand and stare at the house as you went and did. It's a costume piece, and in you rush in your ordinary clothes. I tell you they're on the lookout for us night and day. It's the toughest nut I ever tackled!"

"Well," said I, "if you had told me so before I shouldn't have come. You told me nothing."

He looked hard at me from under the broken brim of a battered billy-cock.

"You're right," he said at length. "I've been too close. It's become second nature with me when I've anything on. But here's an end of it, Bunny, so far as you're concerned. I'm going home now, and I want you to follow me; but for Heaven's sake keep your distance, and don't speak to me again till I speak to you. There—give me a start." And he was off again, a decrepit vagabond, with his hands in his pockets, his elbows squared, and frayed coat tails swinging raggedly from side to side.

I followed him to the Finchley Road. There he took an Atlas omnibus, and I sat some rows behind him on the top, but not far enough to escape the pest of his vile tobacco. That he could carry his character sketch to such a pitch—he who would only smoke one brand of cigarette! It was the last, least touch

of the insatiable artist, and it charmed away what mortification there still remained in me. Once more I felt the fascination of a comrade who was forever dazzling one with a fresh and unsuspected facet of his character.

As we neared Piccadilly I wondered what he would do. Surely he was not going into the Albany like that? No, he took another omnibus to Sloane Street, I sitting behind him as before. At Sloane Street we changed again, and were presently in the long, lean artery of the King's Road. I was now all agog to know our destination, nor was I kept many more minutes in doubt. Raffles got down. I followed. He crossed the road and disappeared up a dark turning. I pressed after him, and was in time to see his coat tails as he plunged into a still darker, flagged alley to the right. He was holding himself up and stepping out like a young man once more; also, in some subtle way, he already looked less disreputable. But I alone was there to see him, the alley was absolutely deserted, and desperately dark. At the farther end he opened a door with a latchkey, and it was darker yet within.

Instinctively I drew back and heard him chuckle. We could no longer see each other.

"All right, Bunny! There's no hanky-panky this time. These are studios, my friend, and I'm one of the lawful tenants."

Indeed, in another minute we were in a lofty room with skylight, easels, dressing cupboard, platform, and every other adjunct save the signs of actual labor. The first thing I saw, as Raffles lit the gas, was its reflection in his silk hat on the pegs beside the rest of his normal garments.

"Looking for the works of art?" continued Raffles, lighting a cigarette and beginning to divest himself of his rags. "I'm afraid you won't find any, but there's the canvas I'm always going to

make a start upon. I tell them I'm looking high and low for my ideal model. I have the stove lit on principle twice a week, and look in and leave a newspaper and a smell of Sullivans—how good they are after shag! Meanwhile I pay my rent and am a good tenant in every way; and it's a very useful little *pied-à-terre*—there's no saying how useful it might be at a pinch. As it is, the billycock comes in and the topper goes out, and nobody takes the slightest notice of either; at this time of night the chances are that there's not a soul in the building except ourselves."

"You never told me you went in for disguises," said I, watching him as he cleansed the grime from his face and hands.

"No, Bunny, I've treated you very shabbily all round. There was really no reason why I shouldn't have shown you this place a month ago, and yet there was no point in my doing so, and circumstances are just conceivable in which it would have suited us both for you to be in genuine ignorance of my whereabouts. I have something to sleep on, as you perceive, in case of need, and, of course, my name is not Raffles in the King's Road. So you will see that one might bolt farther and fare worse."

"Meanwhile you use the place as a dressing room?"

"It's my private pavilion," said Raffles. "Disguise? In some cases they're half the battle, and it's always pleasant to feel that, if the worst comes to the worst, you needn't necessarily be convicted under your own name. Then they're indispensable in dealing with the fences. I drive all my bargains in the tongue and raiment of Shoreditch. If I didn't, there'd be the very devil to pay in blackmail. Now, this cupboard's full of all sorts of togger. I tell the woman who cleans the room that it's for my models when I find 'em.

By the way, I only hope I've got something that'll fit you, for you'll want a rig for to-morrow night."

"To-morrow night!" I exclaimed. "Why, what do you mean to do?"

"The trick," said Raffles. "I intended writing to you as soon as I got back to my rooms, to ask you to look me up to-morrow afternoon; then I was going to unfold my plan of campaign, and take you straight into action then and there. There's nothing like putting the nervous players in first; it's the sitting with their pads on that upsets their apple cart; that was another of my reasons for being so confoundedly close. You must try to forgive me. I couldn't help remembering how well you played up last trip, without any time to weaken on it beforehand. All I want is for you to be as cool and smart to-morrow night as you were then; though, by Jove, there's no comparison between the two cases!"

"I thought you would find it so."

"You were right. I have. Mind you, I don't say this will be the tougher job all round; we shall probably get in without any difficulty at all; it's the getting out again that may flummox us. That's the worst of an irregular household!" cried Raffles, with quite a burst of virtuous indignation. "I assure you, Bunny, I spent the whole of Monday night in the shrubbery of the garden next door, looking over the wall, and, if you'll believe me, somebody was about all night long! I don't mean the Kafirs. I don't believe they ever get to bed at all—poor devils! No, I mean Rosenthal himself, and that pasty-faced beast Purvis. They were up and drinking from midnight, when they came in, to broad daylight, when I cleared out. Even then I left them sober enough to slang each other. By the way, they very nearly came to blows in the garden, within a few yards of me, and I heard something that might come in useful and make Rosenthal shoot

crooked at a critical moment. You know what an I. D. B. is?"

"Illicit diamond buyer?"

"Exactly. Well, it seemed that Rosenthal was one. He must have let it out to Purvis in his cups. Anyhow, I heard Purvis taunting him with it, and threatening him with the break-water at Capetown; and I begin to think our friends are friend and foe. But about to-morrow night; there's nothing subtle in my plan. It's simply to get in while these fellows are out on the loose, and to lie low till they come back, and longer. If possible we must doctor the whisky. That would simplify the whole thing, though it's not a very sporting game to play; still, we must remember Rosenthal's revolver; we don't want him to sign his name on us. With all those Kafirs about, however, it's ten to one on the whisky, and a hundred to one against us if we go looking for it. A brush with the heathen would spoil everything, if it did no more. Besides, there are the ladies——"

"The deuce there are!"

"Ladies with an *i*, and the very voices for raising Cain. I fear, I fear the clamor! It would be fatal to us. *Au contraire*, if we can manage to stow ourselves away unbeknowns, half the battle will be won. If Rosenthal turns in drunk, it's a purple diamond apiece. If he sits up sober, it may be a bullet instead. We will hope not, Bunny; and all the firing wouldn't be on one side; but it's on the knees of the gods."

And so we left it when we shook hands in Piccadilly—not by any means as much later as I could have wished. Raffles would not ask me to his rooms that night. He said he had made it a rule to have a long night before playing cricket and—other games. His final word to me was framed on the same principle.

"Mind, only one drink to-night, Bun-

ny. Two at the outside—as you value your life—and mine!"

I remember my abject obedience; and the endless, sleepless night it gave me; and the roofs of the houses opposite standing out at last against the blue-gray London dawn. I wondered whether I should ever see another, and was very hard on myself for that little expedition which I had made on my own willful account.

It was between eight and nine o'clock in the evening when we took up our position in the garden adjoining that of Reuben Rosenthal; the house itself was shut up, thanks to the outrageous libertine next door, who, by driving away the neighbors, had gone far toward delivering himself into our hands. Practically secure from surprise on that side, we could watch our house under cover of a wall just high enough to see over, while a fair margin of shrubs in either garden afforded us additional protection. Thus entrenched, we had stood an hour, watching a pair of lighted bow windows with vague shadows flitting continually across the blinds, and listening to the drawing of corks, the clink of glasses, and a gradual crescendo of coarse voices within. Our luck seemed to have deserted us; the owner of the purple diamonds was dining at home and dining at undue length. I thought it was a dinner party. Raffles differed; in the end he proved right. Wheels grated in the drive, a carriage and pair stood at the steps; there was a stampede from the dining room, and the loud voices died away, to burst forth presently from the porch.

Let me make our position perfectly clear. We were over the wall, at the side of the house, but a few feet from the dining-room windows. On our right, one angle of the building cut the back lawn in two diagonally; on our left, another angle just permitted us to see the jutting steps and the waiting carriage. We saw Rosenthal come out

—saw the glimmer of his diamonds before anything. Then came the pugilist; then a lady with a head of hair like a bath sponge; then another, and the party was complete.

Raffles ducked and pulled me down in great excitement.

"The ladies are going with them," he whispered. "This is great!"

"That's better still."

"The Gardenia!" the millionaire had bawled.

"And that's best of all," said Raffles, standing upright as hoofs and wheels crunched through the gates and rattled off at a fine speed.

"Now what?" I whispered, trembling with excitement.

"They'll be clearing away. Yes, here come their shadows. The drawing-room windows open on the lawn. Bunny, it's the psychological moment. Where's that mask?"

I produced it with a hand whose trembling I tried in vain to still, and could have died for Raffles when he made no comment on what he could not fail to notice. His own hands were firm and cool as he adjusted my mask for me, and then his own.

"By Jove, old boy," he whispered cheerfully, "you look about the greatest ruffian I ever saw! These masks alone will down a nigger, if we meet one. But I'm glad I remembered to tell you not to shave. You'll pass for White-chapel if the worst comes to the worst and you don't forget to talk the lingo. Better sulk like a mule if you're not sure of it, and leave the dialogue to me; but, please our stars, there will be no need. Now, are you ready?"

"Quite."

"Got your gag?"

"Yes."

* "Shooter?"

"Yes."

"Then follow me."

In an instant we were over the wall, in another on the lawn behind the

house. There was no moon. The very stars in their courses had veiled themselves for our benefit. I crept at my leader's heels to some French windows opening upon a shallow veranda. He pushed. They yielded.

"Luck again," he whispered; "nothing *but* luck! Now for a light."

And the light came!

A good score of electric burners glowed red for the fraction of a second, then rained merciless white beams into our blinded eyes. When we found our sight four revolvers covered us, and between two of them the colossal frame of Reuben Rosenthal shook with a wheezy laughter from head to foot.

"Good evening, boys," he hiccupped. "Glad to see ye at last. Shift foot or finger, you on the left, though, and you're a dead boy. I mean you, you greaser!" he roared out at Raffles. "I know you. I've been waitin' for you. I've been *watchin'* you all this week! Plucky smart you thought yerself, didn't you? One day beggin', next time shammin' tight, and next one o' them old pals from Kimberley what never come when I'm in. But you left the same tracks every day, you bug-gins, an' the same tracks every night, all round the blessed premises."

"All right, guv'nor," drawled Raffles; "don't excite. It's a fair cop. We don't sweat to know 'ow you brung it off. On'y don't you go for to shoot, 'cos we 'int awmed, s'help me Gord!"

"Ah, you're a knowin' one," said Rosenthal, fingering his triggers. "But you've struck a knowin'er."

"Ho, yuss, we know all abaht thet! Set a thief to ketch a thief—ho, yuss."

My eyes had torn themselves from the round, black muzzles, from the accursed diamonds that had been our snare, the pasty pig face of the overfed pugilist, and the flaming cheeks and hook nose of Rosenthal himself. I was looking beyond them at the doorway filled with quivering silk and plush.

black faces, white eyeballs, woolly pates. But a sudden silence recalled my attention to the millionaire. And only his nose retained its color.

"What d'ye mean?" he whispered with a hoarse oath. "Spit it out, or, by Christmas, I'll drill you!"

"Whort price thet brikewater?" drawled Raffles coolly.

"Eh?"

Rosenthal's revolvers were describing widening orbits.

"Whort price thet brikewater—old I. D. B.?"

"Where in hell did you get hold o' that?" asked Rosenthal, with a rattle in his thick neck, meant for mirth.

"You may well arst," says Raffles. "It's all over the plice w're I come from."

"Who can have spread such rot?"

"I dunno," says Raffles; "arst the gentleman on yer left; p'raps 'e knows."

The gentleman on his left had turned livid with emotion. Guilty conscience never declared itself in plainer terms. For a moment his small eyes bulged like currants in the suet of his face; the next, he had pocketed his pistol on a professional instinct, and was upon us with his fists.

"Out o' the light—out o' the light!" yelled Rosenthal in a frenzy.

He was too late. No sooner had the burly pugilist obstructed his fire than Raffles was through the window at a bound; while I, for standing still and saying nothing, was scientifically felled to the floor.

I cannot have been many moments without my senses. When I recovered them there was a great to-do in the garden, but I had the drawing-room to myself. I sat up. Rosenthal and Purvis were rushing about outside, cursing the Kafirs and nagging at each other.

"Over that wall, I tell yer!"

"I tell you it was this one. Can't you whistle for the police?"

"Police be damned! I've had enough of the blessed police."

"Then we'd better get back and make sure of the other rotter."

"Oh, make sure o' yer skin. That's what you'd better do. Jala, you black hog, if I catch you skulkin'—"

I never heard the threat. I was creeping from the drawing-room on my hands and knees, my own revolver swinging by its steel ring from my teeth.

For an instant I thought that the hall also was deserted. I was wrong, and I crept upon a Kafir on all fours. Poor devil, I could not bring myself to deal him a base blow, but I threatened him most hideously with my revolver, and left the white teeth chattering in his black head as I took the stairs three at a time. Why I went upstairs in the decisive fashion, as though it were my only course, I cannot explain. But garden and ground floor seemed alive with men, and I might have done worse.

I turned into the first room I came to. It was a bedroom—empty, though lit up; and never shall I forget how I started as I entered, on encountering the awful villain that was myself at full length in a pier glass! Masked, armed, and ragged, I was indeed fit carrion for a bullet or the hangman, and to one or the other I made up my mind. Nevertheless, I hid myself in the wardrobe behind the mirror; and there I stood shivering and cursing my fate, my folly, and Raffles most of all—Raffles first and last—for I dare say half an hour. Then the wardrobe door was flung suddenly open; they had stolen into the room without a sound; and I was hauled downstairs, an ignominious captive.

Gross scenes followed in the hall; the ladies were now upon the stage, and at sight of the desperate criminal they screamed with one accord. In

truth I must have given them fair cause, though my mask was now torn away and hid nothing but my left ear. Rosenthal answered their shrieks with a roar for silence; the woman with the bath-sponge hair swore at him shrilly in return; the place became a Babel impossible to describe. I remember wondering how long it would be before the police appeared. Purvis and the ladies were for calling them in and giving me in charge without delay. Rosenthal would not hear of it. He swore that he would shoot man or woman who left his sight. He had had enough of the police. He was not going to have them coming there to spoil sport; he was going to deal with me in his own way. With that he dragged me from all other hands, flung me against a door, and sent a bullet crashing through the wood within an inch of my ear.

"You drunken fool! It'll be murder!" shouted Purvis.

"Wha' do I care? He's armed, isn't he? I shot him in self-defense. It'll be a warning to others."

"You're drunk," said Purvis, still between us. "I saw you take a neat tumblerful since you come in, and it's made you drunk as a fool. Pull yourself together, old man. You ain't a-going to do what you'll be sorry for."

"Then I won't shoot at him, I'll only shoot roun' an' roun' the beggar."

His freckled paw shot up over Purvis' shoulder, mauve lightning came from his ring, a red flash from his revolver.

Next instant the prize fighter disarmed him; and I was safe from the devil, but finally doomed to the deep sea. A policeman was in our midst. He had entered through the drawing-room window; he was an officer of few words and creditable promptitude. In a twinkling he had the handcuffs on my wrists, while the pugilist explained the situation, and his patron reviled the

force and its representative with impotent malignity. A fine watch they kept; a lot of good they did; coming in when all was over and the whole household might have been murdered in their sleep. The officer only deigned to notice him as he marched me off.

"We know all about *you*, sir," said he contemptuously, and he refused the sovereign Purvis proffered. "You will be seeing me again, sir, at Marylebone."

"Shall I come now?"

"As you please, sir. I rather think the other gentleman requires you more, and I don't fancy this young man means to give much trouble."

In silence we traversed perhaps a hundred yards. At last I whispered:

"How on earth did you manage it?"

"Purely by luck," said Raffles. "I had the luck to get clear away through knowing every brick of those back-garden walls, and the double luck to have these togs with the rest over at Chelsea. The helmet is one of a collection I made up at Oxford; here it goes over this wall, and we'd better carry the coat and belt before we meet a real officer. I got them once for a fancy ball—ostensibly—and thereby hangs a yarn. I always thought they might come in useful a second time. My chief crux to-night was getting rid of the hansom that brought me back. I sent him off to Scotland Yard with ten bob and a special message to good old Mackenzie. The whole detective department will be at Rosenthal's in about half an hour. Of course, I speculated on our gentleman's hatred of the police—another huge slice of luck. If you'd got away, well and good; if not, I felt he was the man to play with his mouse as long as possible. Yes, Bunny, it's been more of a costume piece than I intended, and we've come out of it with a good deal less credit. But, by Jove, we're jolly lucky to have come out of it at all!"

Woman's Place Through The Ages

As Certain Sages Saw It:

NONE of the occupations which comprehend the ordering of a state belong to woman as woman, nor yet to man as man; but natural gifts are to be found here and there, in both sexes alike; and, so far as her nature is concerned, the woman is admissible to all pursuits as well as the man, though in all of them the woman is weaker than the man.—*Plato* (427—370 (?) B. C.).



It would be better for women to marry and to walk the beaten road, than to aim at great things and fall headlong into ruin.—*St. Jerome* (331—420).



I AM surprised, my dearest Abélard, that, contrary to the obvious order of things, you should presume, in the very front of your salutation, to put my name before your own. It was preferring a woman to a man In writing to inferiors, they are mentioned first who are first in dignity.—*Héloise* (1098—1162).



THE present state of women, a remnant of the barbarism of the chivalric and the feudal ages—artificial and unnatural. They ought to mind home, and be well fed and clothed, but not to mix in society. Well educated, too, in religion but to read neither poetry nor politics—nothing but books of piety and cookery. Music, drawing, dancing, also a little gardening and plowing now and then. I have seen them mending the roads in Epirus with good success. Why not, as well as hay-making and milking?—*Lord Byron* (1788—1824).



THE view which the people of the East take on woman's proper position is much more correct than ours, with our old French notions of gallantry and our preposterous system of reverence—that highest product of Teutonic-Christian stupidity. These notions have served only to make women more arrogant and overbearing; so that one is occasionally reminded of the holy apes of Benares, who, in the consciousness of their sanctity and inviolable position, think they can do exactly as they please. Woman is by no means fit to be the object of our honor and veneration, or to hold her head higher than man and be on equal terms with him.—*Arthur Schopenhauer* (1788—1860).



THE woman's life should disappear in the man's without a remnant, and it is this relation that is so beautifully and correctly indicated in the fact that the wife no longer uses her own name, but that of her husband!—*Kuno Fischer* (1824—1907).



THE possibility that the ideal of womanhood lies neither in the fair saint nor in the fair sinner; that women are meant neither to be men's guides nor their playthings, but their comrades, their fellows, and their equals, so far as nature puts no bar to their equality, does not seem to have entered into the minds of those who have had the conduct of the education of girls.—*Thomas Huxley* (1825—1895).

by
Rafael Sabatini
Author of *"Saramouche"*



THE FORTUNES OF LAL FAVERSHAM *III. After Worcester Field.*

FROM the dawn at Worcester of that disastrous Wednesday, the third of September of '51, until the noon of Thursday when I flung myself down, jaded and worn, in the woods near Newbury, it seemed to me that not of hours but of years were the things that had befallen me.

I had been one of the gallant troop that, led by our valiant liege himself, had ridden out from the Sidbury Gate and charged the rebels on Perry Wood with a fury that drove them hell-to-leather from their guns. I had been one of those who in that brief hour of exultation had turned eager eyes toward Leslie and his Scottish horse. I had seen the traitor watching us, muffled in his cloak, but stirring never a foot to complete for us the work of victory so well begun. And when, anon, Cromwell's Ironsides recovered and returned to scatter us down the hillside like leaves

before an autumn breeze, and I knew that Worcester field was lost to us because Leslie had failed, in my heart I cursed that treacherous, Presbyterian Scot, as to-day—dead though he be—I curse his memory.

I had been one of the maimed and bleeding troops that had fled back to shelter within Worcester Gates, with guns belching hell upon us from behind. I was one of that last little knot that had hacked a way for the king through the Roundhead press about the Sidbury Gate, and at length—covered with blood and grime, yet with no worse a hurt than a pistol bullet through the fleshy part of my left arm—I had stood and heard the cry of "Save himself who can," in Worcester streets.

'Twas a miracle that I got clear of the town as night was closing in upon that shambles, and made my way along the Severn toward Gloucester.

Guided by the outline of the Cotwold Hills, I rode on toward Cirencester until—after midnight—my martyred brute stopped, shuddered and fell beneath me. For some few hours I slept in the shelter of a hedge, a sleep from which I awakened shuddering, for in my dreams I had seen again the horrors of the day before. The steely gray of dawn was in the sky, and my limbs were numb.

I found a horse grazing in a field—a poor, sorry nag—and on its back I set the saddle of my fallen charger. I forsook the roads, and, having crossed the Thames, I went by fields and woods until some three hours before noon that melancholy horse would go no further. Leaving it, I dragged myself wearily into the shelter of a neighboring wood.

Guided by the murmur of waters, I crawled along until presently I came upon a shallow stream splashing merrily along in the sunlight that fell upon it through the half-denuded trees. I flung myself prone, and like an animal I lowered my head until I could reach the water. I drank—God, how I drank! And there, jaded and worn, with never a thought of what might betide, I fell asleep.

I awakened with a start to find the sunlight gone from the water and the long shadows cast athwart it by the trees, bespeaking evening. Something rustled behind me. I turned sharply and the unexpected sight of a human figure had almost wrung a cry from me, when I saw 'twas no more than a girl. A little slip of golden-headed womanhood it was, of some twenty years at most, with a winsome face and merry blue eyes that looked down upon me half saucily, half timidly.

"Oddslife, child," I cried at last, "you made my awakening a rude one. What o'clock is it?"

"Past six, sir," she replied composedly. Then running her eye over my dusty and disordered apparel, my great boots and spurs, my plumed hat

and lengthy sword, and noting mayhap the gold lace upon the coat that lay beside me, and last of all the haggard face that was turned to hers, her curiosity must have been aroused. "Whence come you, sir?" she asked, and in a breath she added: "You are not from Newbury?"

"Newbury, girl?" I echoed, fastening upon the word. "Why talk you of Newbury? Am I near the place?"

"'Tis but a mile or so away."

I struggled to rise, and inadvertently put forth my wounded arm. I gasped at a sharp twinge of pain.

"You are hurt, sir," exclaimed the maid, coming nearer.

For all reply, I tore aside the blood-stained cambric sleeve and laid bare the wound, which now bled anew. 'Twas a mere nothing, as I have said, but the blood gave it an ugly look, and my little maid went white to the lips at the sight of it. Yet controlling her feelings bravely, she ran to the stream, and dipping her kerchief in the water, she returned and bathed the swollen limb, and when that was done she made shift to bandage it.

"'Tis said a great battle was fought at Worcester yesterday," quoth she.

"Yesterday!" I repeated. "Was it but yesterday?"

Those eyes of hers grew round at that. "You cannot have been there," she murmured, half questioningly.

"Say you so——" I began, then remembering that I knew not to whom I spoke, I stopped abruptly.

"You are afraid to speak, sir. What do you fear?" she cried petulantly. "I am but a woman."

"So, madam, was Delilah."

"Go your ways, sir," she answered, rising with a pretty show of indignation. "Had I known with what a churl I dealt I had not wasted charity upon your arm."

For all my sudden mistrust, I grew

sorely alarmed lest she should leave me where I lay.

"Sweet mistress, forgive me," I begged. "Pity the plight of a poor, hunted cavalier, who, did an angel come down from heaven to minister to his wants, would suspect it of being in league with Cromwell."

She stopped and turned again, and her gentle eyes were full of pity. "You are that, sir?" she asked.

"I am that, child," I answered. "I am a Kentish gentleman, Lionel Faversham by name, who fought yesterday beside his king on Worcester field; a poor, unfortunate cavalier, whose head is worth a handful of guineas to any one who may care to deliver it to the bottle-nosed lord general."

Thus was our peace made, and my heart beat joyously at the news that her father—a farmer in those parts—was secretly a royalist, and that in his house I might count upon a welcome shelter until I had gathered strength to resume my journey toward Chichester. She sat down beside me by the brook, and there by this wise child's advice we waited until night had fallen. At last we ventured forth, and albeit the distance was but half a mile or so, it was to me a weary journey. Our way lay across a meadow from which we passed by a gate into a garden, and stood at length in the shadow of a large and not unimposing house.

The gate clicked behind us, and as if those within had been on the alert, the door was opened, and in the flood of light that fell from it a burly figure was outlined on the threshold.

"Is it you, Kate?" came a man's deep voice, adding, as she ran forward, some mild reproof touching her long absence. This and my presence needed explanation, and that she set about giving her father. But no sooner did the yeoman learn my quality, my condition, and whence I came, than, cutting her explanations short, he drew me into the

house and closed the door. I stood before a huge fire, in a roomy kitchen, blinking like an owl in the light that smote my eyes, and listening with not a little emotion to the burly farmer's cheery welcome.

They set me at table, and the honest fellow and his good dame stood by to minister to my wants.

The meal done, Melland brought forth a black jack and set me in the corner seat by the hearth and there I rested, pervaded by a delicious sense of well-being, such as seemed never before to have been mine. Anon my host renewed his questions, whereupon, with the yeoman, his wife and his two children for as rapt an audience as ever rejoiced the heart of story-teller, I related to them how Worcester had been fought and lost, the horrors that I had witnessed, and that which in my flight I had undergone.

Next morning found me sick and feverish and unable to quit my bed.

At the end of three weeks, thanks to the unflagging care bestowed upon me by Mistress Melland and Kate, I was sufficiently recovered to quit my bed and sit a while in my chamber. But I was monstrous weak, and another week sped by before I dared venture out of doors. Thereafter my strength returned apace, until one day, in the early part of October, I drew my host aside and after expressing to him some little measure of the gratitude that filled my heart, I added that methought 'twas time I should push on to Chichester and the friends upon whose help I counted. But the burly yeoman flouted the idea. I was not yet strong enough, and it was a long ride for one in my condition.

Later, on that same day, Melland came to me with a suit of sad-colored garments and a steeple hat such as Puritans affected.

"Mr. Faversham," said he in apologetic tones, "I am taking a great liberty. That gold-laced coat of yours savors

too much of the cavalier to pass unobserved in so humble a house as mine."

"But who is there to observe it, my good Melland?" I laughed.

His face grew very serious.

"There is one coming to-day who might look upon it with disfavor—one Colonel Jackson of the Roundhead army, and so, if you'll forgive the liberty, methought it wise to bring you these somber clothes so that you may don them should you so think fit."

"But this Colonel Jackson," I asked, "what does he seek at the Knoll?"

"He is the son of a neighboring farmer, and for years—since his childhood—he has been wont to come and go here as he listeth. Myself I prize his sour looks but little, yet he is too dangerous a man nowadays to make an enemy."

"Well, well," I broke in with a laugh, "he shall find me as thorough a Roundhead as ever sang litanies to St. Satan. Give me these godly clothes, Melland."

Arrayed in that devil's livery I sat taking the air in the garden that afternoon, when Kate came out and stood with her head on one side surveying me mockingly.

"Come hither, Kate," I commanded, with ironical sternness. "Come hither and deride not the godliness of my appearance. See you this letter, child?"

And I drew a package from my pocket.

She nodded and came nearer.

"That you may know how great is the service I require of you, let me tell you, Kate, that it is to a lady in Inverness—a lady who may some day—unworthy though I be—do me the honor to become my wife. I doubt she is anxious to learn what hath befallen me, and I would have this letter reach her without delay. Will you see to it, Kate? Myself I dare not venture into Newbury."

She took the letter and gazed abstractedly at the superscription.

"Is Mistress Margaret very beautiful?" she asked abruptly.

I turned to look at her, marveling at

her question. Then I laughed as I thought me of what interest such matters are to a woman.

"Beautiful, Kate?" I cried. "Stay, you shall form your own opinion!" And drawing from my bosom the little jeweled picture my lady had given me, I held it before her. For a long minute she looked intently upon my Margaret's sweet face, then she cried:

"How you must love her!"

"May you be loved some day, child, as truly and loyally as I love her. Some day, perchance, she may know you and thank you for all that you have done for her lover, more fittingly than my clumsy tongue can thank you, little friend."

I patted her hand affectionately as I spoke, for indeed I had grown fond of winsome Kate. She smiled a half sad little smile, and her eyes looked moist. She was about to speak when the gate clicked. I looked up sharply, to behold a tall, gaunt man in black approaching us. One glance at that funereal figure was enough to tell me that this was the expected Colonel Jackson. He was a man of some twenty-five years of age, whose pale, thin face was rendered more somber even than nature had designed it by the shadows that fell on it from his broad-brimmed steeple hat. His eyes were deep-set and red-rimmed, and his nose the bill of a bird of prey; his mouth wide, thin-lipped and cruel. Altogether, he was a damnable-looking knave, and from the moment that I beheld him I believe I hated him. Such feelings are oft reciprocal, and the glance he bestowed upon me was not one of love.

In a surly tone he gave my companion greeting in the Lord, and in an unmannerly fashion inquired my name of her.

"'Tis Master Turner," she answered, "a friend of my father's."

"And of thine, wench?"

"And of mine," she replied calmly, whereupon he scowled at me.

The motive of his unwelcome visits was not long a mystery to me. He came a-wooing, and little Kate was his quarry. That wooing of his was like no other that I have ever seen. He pressed his suit with lines from Holy Writ, and where a lover would have waxed poetical, he cited texts and proverbs.

That Kate detested him was soon apparent, as also that she feared him not a little, and in my heart I wished her rid of him. One morning—the fourth after his coming—from my window, which overlooked the garden, I heard high words out there betwixt them, and from what I caught I gathered that I was the cause of their dissension, and that this singer of psalms was jealous.

Their quarrel gave me an idea, which later in the day I took to Kate.

"Little friend," said I, "I owe you much, and if in some slight measure I might serve you by ridding you of this crop-eared plague, say but so and the thing is done."

"How?" she cried. "You could rid me of him?"

"Can I?" I echoed. "Why, rat me, child, it hath been said that Lal Faversham plays the prettiest sword in England."

"Oh, no, no!" she cried, with a shudder. "I did not understand you. You must not think of it. Promise me that you will not, Mr. Faversham."

I shrugged my shoulders.

"I'll think of it no more. Yet should you change your mind, and find him growing past endurance, command me as a brother."

'Twould seem, however, that not only in my mind but in that also of Master Jackson was the thought begotten that a little sword play might afford us some diversion. He came to me that evening whilst I sat by the fire, and resting his elbow upon the overmantel he scowled down upon me.

"Art like to remain long at Knoll, Master Turner?"

"Longer I doubt than will give thee pleasure," I answered pertly.

"Have a care, Master Turner," he snarled, growing livid.

"A care of what, sirrah?" I retorted, springing up. "Dost threaten me?"

"I am no vain boaster to threaten men," he answered, with more restraint. "I do but warn thee to have a care, Master Turner—if, indeed," he added, with a cunning leer, "*Turner be thy name.*"

"Oddsfish!" I cried impetuously. "Did you but know my name I warrant me you would bear yourself less boldly."

Scarce were the words uttered than I realized their indiscretion, and looked to Colonel Jackson for an explosion. Instead, however, the Puritan's face grew blank with surprise, and in his eyes was the look of a man who has stumbled upon a great discovery.

I could not guess that his suspicions set upon a spoor by my hint of an identity that should command respect, and by the royal oath that I had made use of, had traveled over my long, lank figure, my black lovelocks, and my swart countenance, bringing him to the conviction that before him stood none other than Charles Stuart, since these particulars vaguely agreed with the description given of the royal fugitive. But learning all this in the light of that which befell thereafter, I can measure Master Jackson's surprise, and marvel not that for a moment it left him speechless. Then recovering himself:

"I profess 'tis no more than I suspected—thou art a malignant. I am no tipstaff, Master Turner; yet endurance hath its bounds; if in four days thou art still at the Knoll or in the neighborhood, I shall arrest thee. Be warned and be grateful for a generosity greater than thou deservest."

'Twas a speech well conceived to deaden my alarm, and—fool that I was—I let his treacherous cunning cozen

me, and rested satisfied that for four days he would take no action.

The day was Monday; I resolved that on the following Wednesday I would depart. Had I been possessed of a grain of wit I had quitted the Knoll that very night. Instead, I set about making ready for my departure with all ease and leisure. On the morrow I commissioned Melland to purchase me a horse, and that same day he brought me a stout sorrel for which I paid him twenty caroluses.

Wednesday's sun rose and set, and for the last time I found myself at supper at Master Melland's hospitable board. One hour more had I to spend 'neath the roof that had so long sheltered me, and of which I shall carry to my grave a memory laden with gratitude and affection. I sat spurred and booted, and in the stable my horse awaited me, ready saddled for the night journey.

Opposite to me sat the colonel, a leer of triumphant mockery on his face, begotten, methought, of his joy at my departure. Melland was speaking, when of a sudden a tramp of feet without came to startle us. It was the regular tramp of trained bands, and in the sound there was something ominous and menacing. It was followed by a knock that was like the blow of a weapon against the door.

In silence Melland rose and went to open, giving me in passing a look that was eloquent with fear. Mistress Melland, Kate, and her sister Betty looked on with white faces, but said no word. Jackson alone remained calm, that sinister smile upon his lipless mouth. In a flash, it came to me that he had betrayed me, but before I could voice my discovery the door was opened and on the threshold stood a short, fat man. The sight of that portly figure and vulgar face with its great red nose brought me to my feet in an instant, and a madness seemed to fire my blood—'twas the arch fiend, Cromwell, himself!

"Greeting to all in God's name!" he exclaimed, in a deep, sonorous voice. My answer was to snatch a knife from the table, and fling myself in a blind access of rage toward that loathesome murderer.

But scarce had I taken two steps when, from behind, a couple of arms caught me about the middle; a leg was thrust around mine, and tripped, I fell, with Master Jackson on top of me. Before I could realize what had chanced, I was on my feet again with a trooper on either side of me, and my hands pinioned behind me. For a moment Cromwell eyed me with a glance of cold contempt.

"Who is this that cometh betwixt the lion and his prey?" quoth he in a voice of thunder.

"'Tis he," answered Jackson, "the young man, Charles Stuart."

"This, Charles Stuart!" returned Cromwell, in accents of mingled scorn and rage. "Is it on a fool's errand thou hast brought me hither?"

"If you came to find King Charles," I put in, "your errand was indeed a fool's, Master Oliver. His majesty, whom God befriend, is in France."

"Thou liest!" he blazed.

"You would not dare say so if my hands were untied, you bottle-nosed brewer," I retorted contemptuously.

"How shall I deal with him to stop his ribald tongue?" cried Jackson.

The lord general's baleful eye rested coldly on me for a moment.

"What is thy name, fellow?" he asked.

"Lionel Faversham," I answered recklessly, "gentleman-in-waiting to his majesty, King Charles the Second, and lately a captain in his majesty's army at Worcester."

"The which," he added, "by a crowning mercy of the Lord of Hosts has been scattered as the Philistines were scattered." Then in a sterner voice: "Deal with him as Aman was dealt with, Jackson. Take two men and hang him

to the first tree—— Stay," he amended. "I will be the destroyer of no man's soul. Let him have till daybreak to make his peace with God."

I lay that night in Newbury gaol, listening to the chiming of a neighboring clock by which I reckoned the approach of eternity. I fear me that I did no praying. My course was run, and methought that to seek by a few hours' supplication—because, forsooth, I lacked all other occupation—to make amends for so many misspent years, were little short of an impertinence. I thought much indeed of my sweet Margaret, in far-off Inverness, and but for that thought I might have looked with indifference upon my end. Death and I were no strangers, and after all, to die, I take it, is the chief purpose for which man is born.

A thought or two I bestowed also upon Kate, and I wondered would the gentle child shed a tear for the poor soldier of fortune she had befriended.

Day broke at length, and a bell tolled somewhere in the prison or the neighborhood, I know not which. There was a drawing of bolt and a clatter of keys. The time was come. Heigho! No more remained but to give these crop-ears a lesson in the art of dying.

The door opened and a man bearing a lanthorn entered my cell, followed by another wrapped in a cloak. I rose and bowed.

"Your servant, gentlemen," said I.

Guided by that silent couple, I marched down a long corridor.

"A chilly morning, my friends," I murmured.

"Knows thy ribald tongue no peace, even in such an hour as this?" came Jackson's voice from the folds of the cloak.

"So! 'Tis you, O crop-eared son of Israel!" I answered.

"Peace," he snarled, whilst he of the lanthorn opened a door on our right,

and signed to me to enter. Marveling, I did as I was bidden; then the door was closed and locked upon me, and I found myself in another cell.

I sat down and waited. Moments went by, and presently there came the tramp of feet and clatter of arms. At last, I told myself. But they marched past my door and on in the direction of the cell that I had quitted. I heard them halt, then a piercing shriek reached me. Presently I heard them returning, and with them one whose cries and blasphemies curdled my blood as I listened. Clearly there was another execution at Newbury that morning.

The bell tolled on and on, and at length ceased. Still I waited. The sun rose, and yet none came to me. Anon a gaoler brought me some coarse food and a beaker of water. I questioned him, but he answered naught. And thus the day wore on and evening followed. Weary, I stretched myself upon my pallet, and despite the suspense that held me, I went to sleep.

I awakened with the glare of a lanthorn in my eyes to find beside me the same two figures that had visited me at daybreak.

In surly tones, Jackson bade me rise and go with him, and I, thinking that another day had dawned and that at length he was come to lead me to execution, sat up and drew on my boots. Then rising—for I had lain down fully dressed—I professed myself ready. We quitted the cell and proceeded along a corridor and down a flight of steps, and by a doorway we emerged into a courtyard. The sky was black overhead; so black that turning to Jackson I asked him what o'clock it was, and received the answer that it wanted an hour to midnight.

A moment later we were in the street—alone; and this following upon those words of his begot in my mind a suspicion and a hope.

"What doth this mean, Master Jackson?" I asked. "Whither go we?"

"Thou shalt learn presently."

We turned the corner of a street, and in the gloom I discerned the outline of a horse, and a human figure that suddenly advanced toward us.

"Kate!" I cried, springing forward. "Is it you again, little friend? Have you moved the stony heart of this Puritan to gain my liberty?"

"It may be that my prayers have had some little weight with him. To him it is, however, that your thanks are due for your liberty. He is saving your life at the peril of his own."

"Zounds, Master Jackson," quoth I, holding out my hand, "I crave your pardon for the injustice that in my thoughts I have done you. My thanks——"

"I seek them not," he broke in churlishly. "The hour grows late, Master Faversham, and your journey is a long one. Yonder stands your horse. Mount and begone, and see that you tarry not."

Amazed by so strange a mixture of churlishness and generosity, I made shift to follow his advice. I bade farewell to little Kate, and left her, in memory of one she had served and in earnest of the gratitude that should ever fill my heart, a little ring—the only trinket that I had about me.

Following their directions, I rode through Newbury streets, until of a sudden a voice hailed me:

"Master Faversham, in God's name go no farther until you have heard me." It was the voice of Tony—a servant at the Knoll Farm, and a Papist. Therefore, one who out of his hatred for Roundheads was my friend. His earnest accents and the strange fact that he should lie in wait for me, commanded a hearing and so I bade him speak.

He besought me to accompany him to a hostelry whose landlord was his friend, and nothing loath, since a stirrup cup would be right welcome, I fell in with his proposal. He roused the host of the

Black Horse Inn, and bade my nag be cared for.

In deep amazement, I followed the lad to a room of the hostelry.

"Forgive my freedom, Mr. Faversham," he began, "but know you the price that is being paid for your liberty?"

"Price, fellow?" I echoed.

"Aye, sir—price," he repeated. And forthwith he told me that, which but for the witless fool I was, I should have suspected. He told me that to purchase my liberty Mistress Kate had consented to become the wife of Jackson. The colonel had offered to save my life, naming his price, and this she had consented to pay. The governor of Newbury gaol stood for some reason in awe of him, and consented to close his eyes whilst the thing was done. The gaoler he had bribed with fifty pounds, and they had removed me from my cell half an hour before the time appointed for the execution, substituting a poor wretch lying also under sentence of death. Him Jackson had hanged in the presence of the two troopers Cromwell had left him and they, duped by drowsiness, sloth, and the gray half light of dawn, had suspected naught. To Cromwell, Jackson had sent by one of them the message that Lionel Faversham had suffered death.

Tony had overheard the bargain driven by Jackson, and the details that I have set down, and had determined to frustrate his plans if possible. With what mingled emotions I listened to him!

"Leave me, good Tony," I exclaimed. "I swear to you by my honor that Mistress Kate shall not be sacrificed. I hold Master Jackson in the hollow of my hand."

I lay at the Black Horse that night, and next morning I rode out of Newbury betimes, and followed the Kennet for half a mile or so in the direction of Colonel Jackson's house. But I was spared the trouble of going there to seek

him, for of a sudden a turn of the road brought me face to face with the Round-head himself, riding in the opposite direction. He changed countenance upon beholding me.

"Art mad, Master Faversham," he gasped, "that I find you here when you should be far on your way to the coast?"

"I am not riding to the coast at present," I answered coldly. "Whither I turn my horse's head depends upon yourself, for unless I find you reasonable, and docile as a godly man should be, London is my destination."

"London!"

"Aye, man, London—Whitehall. Nay, stare not so. I shall but go to tell your ruby-nosed lord protector that the godly son of Israel, Colonel Jackson, is a perjured liar, who whilst sending him word that he had hanged the malignant Faversham for attempting his august life, did, in fact, let that godless follower of Charles Stuart go free."

Very white was Colonel Jackson's face, and very baleful his eye. "Is it thus thou repayest me for the gift of thy life?"

"You looked for payment of another sort, and in another quarter, eh? As for this life of mine, I scorn the gift at your hands, and had I known the price that was being paid you, I had refused to quit Newbury gaol."

"What is the price to thee? What is the wench to thee?"

"One who befriended me in my hour of need. No more than that—but less than that shall she be to you, for, as God lives, Master Jackson, either you swear to me upon the Book to forego the payment you had exacted, and to press your hateful suit no further, or I go straight to Whitehall. You have reckoned for once without your host,

Master Jackson. Come, make your choice."

"I have no choice to make," he answered passionately. "I will not choose. Dismount, sir, and let us end this matter."

"Right willingly," I cried, "since to die will please you better."

And so it befell that we faced each other in a meadow by the wayside.

His onslaught was ponderous as a charge of cavalry, and as clumsy.

At the third disengage I slipped his guard, and got my point into him in the region of his heart. For a second he writhed, then fell in a heap—stone dead.

I lingered not, but wiping my blade, I straightway got to horse again and rode off. At a crossroads, half a mile away, I came upon Tony.

"You have seen the colonel?" he asked.

"Aye, I have seen him, Tony."

"What says he?"

"At present naught—unless he be quoting Holy Writ to the devil."

"You have——"

"He would have it so," I deprecated. "We fought in the meadow yonder, where you'll find his carrion if you have a mind to."

The lad shuddered and for a second he was silent. Then:

"You'll go to the Knoll, sir?"

"I think not, Tony. 'Tis best I should get hence without delay. You'll tell Mistress Kate that she need no longer pay the noble price she offered for my life—a price too high by far for a thing so worthless. Fare you well, Tony."

I wrung his hand, leaving ten caroluses in his grasp, then, driving deep my spurs, I rode on.



ONE should part from life as Ulysses parted from Nausicaa—blessing it rather than in love with it.—*Friedrich Nietzsche.*

The Foretaste



IN AINSLEE'S FOR FEBRUARY

THEN the gramophone began. Davidson started nervously when he heard it, but said nothing. Men's voices floated up. Miss Thompson's guests were joining in a well-known song, and presently they heard her voice, too, hoarse and loud. There was a good deal of shouting and laughing. The four people upstairs, trying to make conversation, listened despite themselves to the clink of glasses and the scrape of chairs. More people had evidently come. Miss Thompson was giving a party.

"I wonder how she gets them all in," said Mrs. MacPhail, breaking into a medical conversation between the missionary and her husband.

It showed whither her thoughts were wandering. The twitch of Davidson's face proved that, though he spoke of scientific things, his mind was busy in the same direction. Suddenly he sprang to his feet with a cry.

"What's the matter, Alfred?" asked Mrs. Davidson.

"Of course! It never occurred to me. She's out of Iwelei."

"She can't be."

"She came on board at Honolulu. It's obvious. And she's carrying on her trade here. Here!"

He uttered the last word with a passion of indignation.

"What's Iwelei?" asked Mrs. MacPhail.

He turned his gloomy eyes on her and his voice trembled with horror.

"The plague spot of Honolulu . . . the most crying scandal of the Pacific! How dare she come here! I'm not going to allow it."

He strode toward the door.

"What are you going to do?" asked MacPhail.

"What do you expect me to do? I'm going to stop it. I'm not going to have this house turned into—into—"

He sought for a word that should not offend the ladies' ears. His eyes were flashing and his pale face was paler still in his emotion.

"It sounds as though there were three or four men down there," said the doctor. "Don't you think it's rather rash to go in just now?"

The missionary gave him a contemptuous look and without a word flung out of the room.

"You know Mr. Davidson very little if you think the fear of personal danger can stop him in the performance of his duty," said his wife.

From "*Rain*," by W. Somerset Maugham.

* * *

TERESA said crushingly: "Did you walk all about München with that enormous hole in your stocking? I wonder Ike put up with it."

Antonia turned over her little foot and looked at it. Most of her pink heel stuck out of her stocking. She said instantly: "Ike gave me stockings. He gave me twelve pair, all silk and all different colors."

"Fancy taking clothes from him!"

"I didn't. I threw them out of the window. I asked him what he took me for. And they all got caught in the telegraph wires, and the people in the street looked so surprised. It was windy, you know, and they waved about like little flags. I laughed till I nearly fell out of the window myself."

"Liar!"

"I did. It's true. I said to Ike: 'If I have a hole in my stocking, what's that to you? If I'm not grand enough for you to take me out, leave me alone and I'll go home.' And he said I could throw them out of the window if I liked. So I threw them. And he said he didn't mind."

She pulled herself up with a little gasp as if she had stumbled upon a recollection which terrified her. But she went on, boastfully elaborating the details of her escapade and heaping insults upon Birnbaum as though by abuse she could avenge the humiliation of her surrender. She seemed to be bent upon representing him in as ridiculous a light as possible, and Lewis, who joined them in time to hear some of her most highly colored sallies, was struck by their apt cruelty—at the edge which this episode seemed to have put upon her somewhat primitive wit. He sat on the piano stool, applauding her waggery and encouraging her to fresh efforts until something in her desperate spirits made him uneasy. He observed her more closely, got a glimpse of the disaster in her eyes, and laughed no more; turning round abruptly he began to play the piano and ended the conversation.

From "*The Constant Nymph*," by Margaret Kennedy.

* * *

SHE had thought herself free, but she saw now that she had never been free; she had slept, and the sound of his voice, the touch of his hand in greet-

ing, had been enough to wake her. Ecstasy waited again like wine at her closed lips. She could gulp it down, a madness to consume them both.

The eyelids flickered in her calm face. Looking at her he saw nothing but her beauty, a serene childlike beauty of quiet eyes and wide, fine-pointed mouth.

When he spoke she held herself a little aloof, hoarding her strength. It was easy to talk to him while he stayed at the other side of the room. His voice might thrust into her its intimate sweetness, but let him keep away and he would not know that she was faint for a remembered caress. He would go away—not to come back—and again she would escape from herself and from this violence lurking in her.

From "*The Pitiful Wife*," by Storm Jameson.

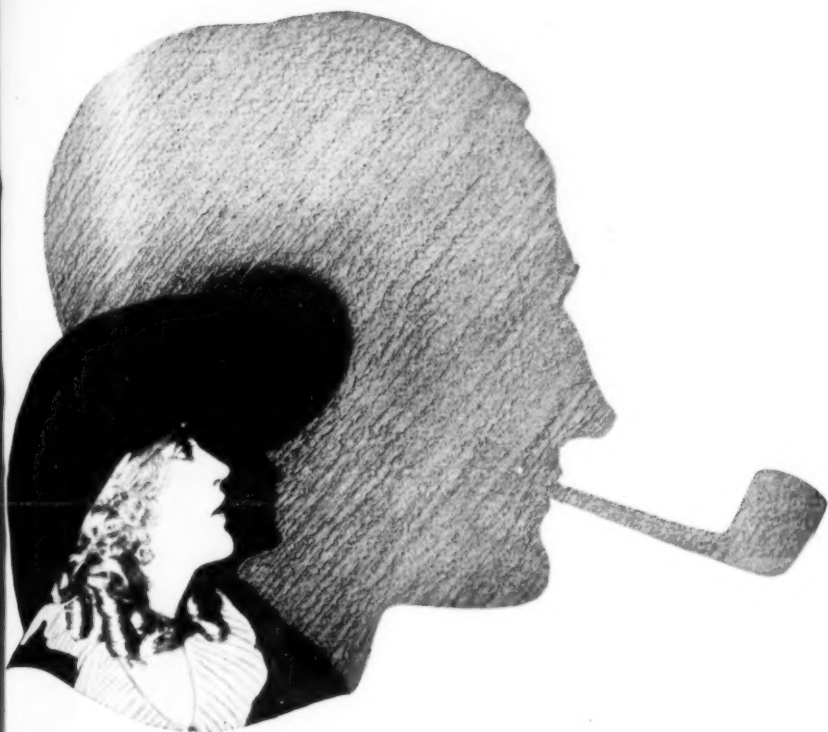


OTHER STORIES

The contents of the February issue will include eight stories besides those from which we have just quoted. The authors are Leonard Merrick, E. W. Hornung, P. G. Wodehouse, Rafael Sabatini, Stephen Crane, O. Henry, Larry Evans, and Arthur Mills. There will be another Book Lovers' Tournament, offering the third of a series of anonymous masterpieces; and, scattered through the magazine, stimulating verse and fragments from the pens of the wise, the witty, the lyric, and the cynical.

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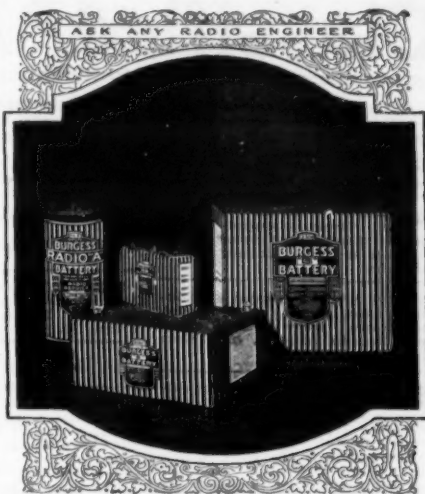
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Why They Stopped Calling Me "Sissie"

How a "Sissie" Became a "Samson"

By J. E. R.

"Oh you sissie." "Oh sister." "Mary Jane." "Mamma's boy." These were the pet names they used to call me. For years my blood boiled whenever I heard them. But I knew enough at least not to get into a fight—that is, except once. Here's what happened—and why I just had to swallow whatever insults were handed to me.

About two years ago I was standing in line waiting to get into a ball game. A little fellow about five feet four inches me out of line. We had an argument—he swung on me—down I went and amid the most humiliating laughter I went back to the end of the line.

After that I "ducked" every argument. I wouldn't fight a ten year old boy. I became afraid of my own shadow.

I was fairly tall, but skinny as a rail, with muscles like soft butter. I looked, felt and acted like a weakling. On my way home every evening I had to pass a corner where gathered the neighborhood gang. And every night it was the same insulting line of remarks: "Hello Sissy"—"Good evening Clarence"—and so on.

There was nothing I could do except bear it and grin. But that wasn't my worst trouble. At the office I was as meek as a lamb—never dared offer a suggestion for fear someone would jump on me. I was just plain scared. Everybody "bluffed" me. Everybody seemed to get ahead of me. I stuck in the same old job at pretty much the same old pay. I didn't have courage enough to think of a raise—much less ask for one. I was the office "goat"—the butt of all jokes, the target of all blame. It's a wonder I held my job—unimportant as it was.

And after office hours—in the long evenings—I was so quiet, so scared, so meek that no one cared to have me around. As soon as I could I would sneak away and go home to my room and brood. I didn't know at that time what my trouble was.

Well, to make my confession complete, one evening I met Sally. She seemed more interested in me than any other girl I'd ever met before. She was much too good for me—but she talked to me as only one girl can talk to a fellow. Finally I plucked up enough courage to ask if I could take her home. She lived near by—and we had to pass the corner "gang." This was "pie" for that bunch of rowdies. What they said to me you can well imagine—a "sissy" going with a fine looking girl! And what Sally thought of me for not lashing into them after those insults I hated to imagine. But like the wonderful girl that she is, she said nothing.

During the few months after that I always took Sally home by another street. In the meantime I



Now they tip their hats when we pass by

heard of Earle Liederman and wrote to him.

Liederman told me that mental courage is in many instances the product of physical courage—that is, the man with muscles isn't afraid to put his ideas forward and carry them through. He said that health is essential to right thinking—straight thinking. He asked me if I had ever heard of a weakling getting anywhere in the business world—or if I ever knew a "softy" who ever was popular in society. Men—just as much as women—preferred the company of real HE men instead of poor excuses for men! Well, I put myself in Earle Liederman's care.

To make this story short, I began to improve almost over night. My muscles began to grow firm and hard. Then they began to develop in size. My whole body began to tingle with energy, vitality, LIFE. My shoulders, my chest, my arms, all showed "through my clothes" that something was happening to me. Instead of a "sissy" I became a Samson. Sally was delighted. I became popular with her friends—and with my own. Even my boss treated me like a human being—and soon placed me in charge of a number of other people.

The other evening I passed the corner "gang." As they had several months before, they began to jeer and jibe—especially one great big fellow who was particularly offensive. I asked Sally to wait—and walked over to the big bully. I stood in front of him and told him I was going to give him the licking of his life. He laughed. I swung—and he dropped like a log. His friends rushed in to help him—and I snatched at them with right and left until the few who were still standing were glad to call it "quits." I take Sally home now—to OUR home—and no one ever says a word. The former rowdies tip their hats to Sally whenever we pass by.

Muscle isn't the only thing Earle

Liederman gives. He gave me a strong, healthy body—unlimited "pep" and energy to do my daily work and do it well. I advise every young fellow to put himself in Liederman's hands. Write for his wonderful 64-page book. It is called "Muscular Development." All he asks you to pay is 10 cents to cover his cost of wrapping and mailing. You will enjoy reading the letters from hundreds of his pupils, and you will be inspired and thrilled by the forty-eight full-page pictures of Mr. Liederman and his prize winning pupils—weak men who, like myself, became strong.

I wish I had gotten in touch with Earle Liederman years before I did. I would have saved myself a lot of agony. Don't YOU put it off—mail the coupon or write a letter NOW. You'll never regret it. Just address



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Come on—help!

I've been writing this Mennen Column for twelve years—with an average of thirty thousand miles a year in Pullmans on the side. I'm not quitting, but I'm not too big to call for help. Pretty nearly every man whose mind hadn't hardened before I could work on him has tried Mennen Shaving Cream. It's no use to argue with a man who is convinced.

It will take a smarter writer than I am to add to the appreciation of a shaver who, after years of suffering, has known the deep, soothing joy of Mennen dermation. You know dermation is the laboratory name for what we regular guys refer to as a licked beard.

I can't, and I doubt if you can, express in words that thrill of victory when, for the first time, your mean, tough piano-wire bristles quit like a dog—just naturally collapsed so that about all a razor had to do was to wipe off the wilted stubble.

But here is my proposition: I want the shavers of America to help write my stuff.

At the bottom of this column, I ask a question. The best answer to that question wins a splendid traveling bag that you couldn't buy for \$50.

I want quick action—this contest closes February 15. I'm the judge. Contest open to all. No strings or conditions except that answers are limited to 100 words. Winning answer will be published as soon as I can pick it. If you don't win this contest, watch for another. I may run several of them. The bag's a beaut. I've never toted one as good. Hand made—big, classy and will last like the Mennen habit.

Here's the Bag



Jim Henry
 (Mennen Salesman)

Here's the "Prize" question:
 When did you first use
MENNEN
SHAVING CREAM
 —and why?
 Are you a regular Now?

Contest closes February 15.
 Write 100 words or less. Watch for another question in early issue. Mail your reply to THE MENNEN COMPANY, Jim Henry Contest, 377 Central Avenue, Newark, New Jersey

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements

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Send me full information on the subject checked and how we will help me win success in that line.

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Name _____

Present Position _____

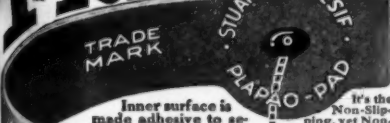
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